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by John
Berryman

THY DAYS ARE NUMBERED

by Wallace
West

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FUTURE SCIENCE FICTION

Robert W.
Lowndes,
Editor

Volume 3

May, 1952

Number 1

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Cover by Milton Luros, from "Forgive Us Our Debts"

Interior Illustrations by Luros, Murphy, and Poulton

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 Get Once Without Cost or Obligation

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 Please rush the new Family Hospital Protection Plan Policy to me on 10 days Free Inspection.
 I understand that I am under no obligation.

Name
 Address
 City or Town State

SERVICE LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY

Agents of \$13,184,844.16 as of January 1, 1955
 Hospital Department T-83, Omaha 2, Nebraska





Today and Tomorrow

ONE OF our most colorful figures of speech is the metaphor, a figure which we employ constantly, often without realizing it. Such phrases as, "he's a rat", "the big city is a jungle", "the mind is a machine", etc., are all examples of metaphor; what they do is to underline *certain limited and superficial resemblances*, and they can assist in understanding the object under consideration—if the limitation is borne in mind.

The danger of this type of small-package intelligence is twofold. First, there's the risk of identification. For example, comparing the human mind to a machine can be a very useful procedure at times; but the usefulness is outweighed by the error involved if we read "the mind is a machine" as "the mind *is* a machine" and stop right there. That identification will lead to predictions: "the mind *is* a machine" (stated) "and therefore, the mind will necessarily function *only* like a machine." (Unconscious assumption.)

A machine computes, and the human mind often computes, too; but a machine does not, and cannot, *think*.

There's a very important difference between "thinking" and "computing", despite certain similarities, as John Berryman shows in "Equations for Destiny".

THE ORIGIN of myth is a subject which presents perennial fascination, and a number of fine science-fiction and fantasy tales have been built upon it. The fact that some such tales have been presented by the authors, or seized upon by various mystics, as "revealed truth" doesn't make a good story of this nature any less enjoyable as fiction. And I think you'll find Wallace West's series of novelets, dealing with the "great legend" quite enjoyable—the kind of story which *could* perhaps approach "truth", but which entails no delusion of any such kind on the part of the author or your editor.

Each novelet is complete in itself, and the series makes one book-length novel. This seems to me to be one way of avoiding serials, and getting longer stories at the same time. Those who pick up the series with the later

[Turn To Page 8]

LEOPARD

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for all cars,

all years, makes
and models



2⁹⁵
EACH

Try in
your car
for 10 days

at MY risk....

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Has great big built-in stretch! Ingenious SNAP-FLEX design—just snap on or off in a JIFFY! Best of all, you pay only 2.95 for front or rear seat!

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novelets won't *have* to try to find the earlier "installments" in order to know what is going on—though admittedly, the best way is to read them in order. I'd like to know if this experiment appeals to you readers, because we can run other "novels" in the same manner, if you wish.

I'M NOT going to come to a hasty decision as to what your votes show on the subject of awarding originals to the favored fans and readers in the letter section; so until and unless a definite vote goes against the practice, we'll run it this way: if you like the idea, list your three nominations, and I'll carry on from there.

Letters of all lengths are welcome, and while it's nicest of all to read neatly-typed ones, handwritten letters will neither be disdained nor ignored, so long as I can decipher the script.

We retain the right to make small cuts, etc., but for the most part, your letters are published as you wrote them. As you've seen, I'm not afraid of mentioning the titles of other magazines, or mentioning names, so long as nothing libelous is there. That is something I have to watch out for; so while you should, by all means, say what you think, in as forceful a manner as you can, I may, at times, have to tone some down, or either eliminate some, when I send it to the printer. I'm not going to rule out, arbitrarily, any type of letter, because there can be very enjoyable letters of types which one might ordinarily say should be kept out completely.

There's just one mild plea—if you can, please write as early as possible after an issue comes out; there's not much more than a three-weeks headway between the time that this issue of *Future* goes on sale and the time the next issue is closed. But don't worry about deadlines; if you get that impulse some weeks later, by all means nurture it. —RWL

Letters

12-ISSUE REPORT

Dear Editor:

Now that I've read the twelve issues of *Future*, I thought you'd like to hear one reader's feelings about how your magazine shapes up. I won't talk about covers and artwork, since nearly everyone else goes into that, except to say that I think that your Mr. Luros did the best one to date—for "The Last Lunacy", March 1951—with second honors to Bergey for his illustration for "Barrier of Dread"—July-August 1950, and third place to Finlay for "Devil's Cargo". This is really high praise for Finlay, so far as I'm concerned, because while he's usually first-rate on weird and fantasy covers, I've never cared much for his science-fiction covers. In fact, this is the first of those I've seen that I thought was really good. Luros and Bergey also did the two covers I liked least—September 1951 and May-June 1950—with Morey's jacket for "Invitation to the Stars" coming out third poorest.

Now to the fiction: you've published 73 stories in all, and I'm listing them below under the headings of 1 to 5. The way I see it is this: 1—outstanding, a story I'd pick for anthologizing if I had the chance. 2—very good, a story I might re-read some years later. 3—enjoyable, but little more. 4—just readable; can't say I'd worry about finishing it were I interrupted. 5—editorial error, the way I see it.

You've been straightforward enough with us readers in your comments, so I thought that maybe you'd like to run this list in "Down to Earth", and put in your own ratings, too—see how the stories look to you in afterthought, and after you've seen how the fans rated them. (I wonder if you'll list any 5's!)

Well, here's my list.

(I don't like to interpolate my comments in the body of a reader's letter, but, in this case it's definitely in order. You'll note three sets of parentheses before each title. The first contains Mr. Freeman's rating; the second contains mine, and the third is blank in case you'd like to insert your own. I won't put down any "5" ratings—not that I'm under any illusion of infallibility, but because my errors were revealed by the readers' ratings, and I've already acknowledged which stories re-

[Turn To Page 10]



She'll be your "Dream Girl" You'll "Bewitch" her with it

Daring
"BLACK
MAGIC"



"DREAM GIRL" She'll look alluring, breathtaking, enticing, exotic. . . . Just picture her in it. . . . beautiful, fascinating SEE-THRU sheer. Naughty but nice. . . . It's French Fashion fiery. . . . With peek-a-boo magic lace. . . . Gorgeously transparent yet completely practical (washes like a dream. . . . will not shrink). Has lacy waistline, lacy shoulder straps and everything to make her love you for it. A charm revealing Dream Girl Fashion. . . . In gorgeous Black.

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Please send me DREAM GIRL gown at \$9.95. If not entirely satisfied, I'll return within 30 days for full cash refund.

() I enclose \$9.95 cash, check or money order, send postage prepaid (I save up to \$2.00 postage). (You may get it at our store too!)

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Name

Address

City State



Heaven
Sent
Oriental
Magic



Out of the pages of the Arabian Nights comes this glamorous sheer Harem pajama. You'll look beguiling, alluring, irresistible, enticing. You'll thrill to the sleek, clinging wispy appeal that they will give you. He'll love you for transplanting you to a dream world of adoration centuries old. Brief figure hugging top gives flattering appeal to its daring bare midriff. Doubled at the right places, it's the perfect answer for hostess wear. Billowing sheer bottoms for rich luxurious lounging. He'll adore you in this charm revealing Dream Girl Fashion. In wispy sheer black.

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() I will pay postman \$9.95 plus postage. Check size wanted:

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Name

Address

City State



Daring Bare-back
She'll be en-
tranced with it



Your Dream girl will be an exquisite vision of allurements, charm, fascination and loveliness in this exotic, bewitching, daring bare-back filmy sheer gown. It's delicate translucent fabric (washes like a dream) will not shrink. Have Paris at home, with this cleverly designed halter neck that ties or unties at the flick of a finger. Lavishly laced midriff and peek-a-boo bottom. She'll love you for this charm revealing Dream Girl Fashion. In exquisite black sheer.

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() I enclose \$9.95 cash, check or money order, send postage prepaid (I save up to \$2.00 postage). (You may get it at our store too!)

() I will pay postman \$9.95 plus postage. Check size wanted:

32 34 36 38 40 IN BLACK ONLY
(If you don't know the size send approximate height and weight)

Name

Address

City State

ceived heavy panning. So the second series of listings show how I still feel about the tales, even though some of them were not liked by the majority. While I'm trying not to repeat on a story-type you readers disliked by large majorities, I don't believe in doing an about-face on a tale I had faith in at the time. RWL)

(1) (1) () Nobody Saw the Ship—Leinster: already anthologized; enough said.

(1) (1) () Be Young Again—Leinster: this ought to lead off a humor anthology!

(1) (2) () Wide-Open Planet—de Camp: it just comes to mind whenever I try to think of the "best in *Future*".

(1) (1) () The Secret People—Blish/Knight: excellent feeling in this one.

(1) (2) () The Genius Beasts—MacCreigh: first-rate example of the lightweight adventure story without the usual nonsense.

(1) (2) () Incomplete Superman—Anderson: refreshingly different approach.

(1) (1) () Mind of Tomorrow—del Rey: real thought and characterization here.

(1) (2) () Dark Recess—Smith: When George O. rings the bell, it's a beauty!

(1) (1) () Genesis—Piper: I've never seen the theme handled more convincingly.

(1) (2) () Experiment in Genius—Temple: I like subtle satire!

(1) (2) () Quest of the Queen—Linden: absurd, maybe, but I loved it!

(1) (1) () Go to the Ant—Kubilius: old theme, superbly refreshed.

(2) (2) () Dynasty of the Lost—Smith: writing not up to story-level.

(2) (3) () The Miniature Menace—Long: more elements than necessary.

(2) (3) () Martians, Keep Out!—Leiber: propaganda a shade blatant.

(2) (1) () Shadows of Empire—del Rey: should have been more conclusive.

(2) (1) () The Long Return—Anderson: solution sounds a bit pat.

(2) (2) () Caridi Shall Not Die—Kubilius: a bit preachy for my taste.

(2) (2) () The Everlasting Exiles—West: treatment a trifle juvenile.

(2) (1) () Age of Prophecy—St. Clair: I seem to be listing why the No. 2 stories didn't rate No. 1 with me; in this case, I can't put my finger on it.

(2) (2) () The Gray Cloud—Kubilius: unconvincing theme.

(2) (2) () Honorable Enemies—Anderson: very nice, but not much depth to it.

(2) (1) () The Awful Weapon—Coppel: hilarious, but not new.

(2) (2) () Ultrasonic God—de Camp: too close to straight adventure.

(2) (2) () And There Was Light—del Rey: well done, but theme overworked.

(2) (3) () Momentum—Dye: very good for this type of problem-story.

(2) (1) () If I Forget Thee, Oh Earth—Clarke: just an atmosphere piece.

(2) (2) () Voices in the Void—Lesser: on the melodramatic side.

(2) (2) () The Awakening—Clarke: nice, but theme overdone.

(2) (2) () Captain Barnes and the Law—Roman: again, especially clever for this type of story.

(2) (1) () Beautiful, Beautiful, Beautiful!—Friedman: don't know why I didn't rate this higher; it's awfully good.

(3) (2) () Battle of the Unborn—Blish: enjoyable idea; overcompressed and static treatment.

(3) (3) () Earth Needs a Killer—Walton: stereotyped in the author's own way.

(3) (1) () Barrier of Dread—Merrill: unconvincing at the very end.

(3) (2) () Flight From Tomorrow—Piper: okay, but I'm weary of dictator stories.

(3) (3) () Invitation From the Stars—Klass: I'm tired of this theme, too!

(3) (1) () The World-Mover—Smith: maybe I'm dense, but I couldn't follow it. I liked what I could understand, but it became too involved. Perhaps I'll try again, some time, and change my mind—but that's how I feel now.

(3) (2) () The Terror—Coppel: even excellent handling couldn't enliven this worked-to-death theme.

(3) (2) () Slave Psychology—James: somehow, it didn't convince.

(3) (3) () The Last Lunacy—del Rey: not bad, but I expect more from this author.

(3) (3) () The Lithium Mountain—Loomis: pleasant trifle.

(3) (3) () Out of the Atomfire—Walton/Rocklynne: two sets of author-stereotypes. Enjoyable reading, but...

(3) (1) () Fun Can Last Forever—Haggard: I'm allergic to this style of
[Turn To Page 82]



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"None of the constellations are familiar," Dutro said.

EQUATIONS FOR DESTINY



BOWDITCH asked, "You have found a backer?"

Dutro nodded, his long, sardonic face glowing with triumph.

"Another university?" the slight, balding physicist asked, his voice clouded with doubt.

"No," said Dutro. "I am leaving the ivory tower; I have found backing in private industry." The lean, angular face of the psychologist creased in a cruel smile.

"Private industry?" parroted Bowditch. "I don't understand what their interest could be in so pure a form of research."

"Is it necessary that you understand?" Bowditch ignored his tone; one made allowances for a great mind. Dutro stretched erect to his full two meters. "What this University could not see, a great industry has realized. The creative possibilities of this venture—in what you call pure research—are limitless. My electronic computer will make its user supreme in any field of science he chooses."

The psychologist's sardonic grin deepened. "I hope you will not be hurt to learn that the first problems we will put to the Brain will be in applied physics, your own field. I have backers because they believe

There are things the human mind is incapable of, by its very nature. But can the mind contrive a machine to accomplish such things?

that, with the aid of the electronic computer, I will be a greater physicist than you. I have left the ivory tower by virtue of the sheer lack of power of the unaided human brain." His grin became disdainful as he finished.

"I have no doubt of it," murmured Bowditch, willing to give soft insult.

Dutro's face froze in a momentary spasm of rage. "You fail to understand, of course," he said raspingly. "My backers know my electronic computer can solve any problem men have enough sense to put to it." He half-turned to go. "Our first computation will be the fields required to nullify gravity."

Bowditch's short, sharp laugh brought Dutro back. His large, yellow teeth showed through his drawn-back lips. "Don't laugh at me!" he raged: "Only the flaws in your mind make you unable to compute them yourself. My computer has the perfection of a machine. An electron has no emotions, no past, no environment, no shoddy heredity, stained with the blood of a thousand decadent generations of humans! It will tell us!" Dutro struck Bowditch's desk with each phrase. His wild black eyes blazed; his shock of thick black hair

tumbled down about his high, bony forehead.

"Perhaps so," Bowditch laughed softly. "But what good do you think will come of it? The laws of conservation of energy can't be nullified, Dutro. Let us suppose you find a way to nullify gravity—I am enough of a scientist to admit anything is possible within limits. Even your psychologist's mind must know that the amount of energy required to do so will at least be equal to the work done in levitating any mass. What have you achieved?" His smooth, bland face beamed with tolerant good humor. It faded with Dutro's next words.

"A typical example of human frailty," the psychologist said, his voice etched with scorn. "A semantic nightmare." He shuddered without affectation. "The great sorrow of my life is to know that I am blood brother to every erratic human on this globe."

He spun on his heel to leave the physicist's office. "Wait," Bowditch called after him.

Dutro stopped at the door. "Well?"

"Where will you be? You know I have always considered your theory of mentation, as applied to your computer, one of the monuments of human thought; I shall be interested in your progress."

Dutro shook his head. "I cannot tell you. My backers have insisted on complete secrecy. For their investment, they naturally expect a monopoly on the fruits of the Brain's thinking. I must ask you to reveal anything I have said to you today."

Bowditch frowned. "Will Miss Giddons have your address? I might wish to reach you by mail."

"No," Dutro said; "Giddons is coming with me."

"You are wise to take her, I imagine," Bowditch said.

"Certainly. She is utterly adept with her hands, a skill I feel sure will be required in operating the controls of the Brain. And she is fully fa-

miliar with all my work in developing the theory of electronic mentation. This much I *will* do, for you have been as near to a friend as I have had in this life: When the Brain is in operation, I shall advise you what degree of success we have had."



HE STRODE from Bowditch's office, his long legs speeding him down the corridor and out to the campus. He cast one scornful look at the marks of scholastic seclusion about him, and stepped into his car. He gave curt greeting to the broad-shouldered, mannishly-suited woman who sat at the wheel; no expression crossed her strong face as she put the car in gear and drew away from the curb.

Giddons drove with an impersonal, robot-like skill. She followed Dutro's instructions, looping back over her route so he could make sure they had not been followed. The car barely drew to a stop to let him alight, and surged away powerfully, the moment his feet touched the pavement.

Dutro never failed to feel a liting of spirit when he entered the Transport Tower. Not the highest building in the world, he knew, but for its size, the most soaring and inspiring in its architectural conception. The high-speed elevator's breathless flight tugged at his ambition. Soon—soon the need for such machinery would vanish. With gravity nullified, how high would the highest building reach? To the stars—yes, to the very stars!

Dutro was no longer held up by the defenses surrounding the Director of the Transport Cartel. The moment his tall, angular frame strode into the outer office, there was a quick scurry, and he was wafted through inner offices—private offices—and into Blackburn's own magnificent quar-

ters, half-enclosed in flawless quartz sheets that gave him a commanding view of the lower city.

There were no attorneys present; the preliminaries had long been disposed of. Blackburn wasted not a moment. "These contracts," he snapped, "are in the form agreed on. The first deposit of ten million credits is now in escrow pending execution of these instruments. You are ready to start?"

"At once." Dutro took Blackburn's stylus and rapidly scrawled his large, ungainly signature to the contracts without glancing at their contents. Blackburn's secretary appeared from nowhere, silently, to ink the fingers of the signatories and affix their prints to the triplicate documents.

Dutro looked across the huge expanse of polished rosewood at Blackburn. "You will not see me again until our success has been complete," he told the Director. "Giddons has already left for the surgeon's. Her features will be altered to make her unrecognizable to the small group that might have seen her before. She shall front for me in all matters; I shall personally remain in absolute seclusion until the work is done. The other security matters will be handled as we have agreed. I shall expect you to act on Giddons' requests as if they were my own."

Blackburn nodded. "How long?" he asked curtly.

Dutro shrugged. "It all depends on the kind of help you can hire me. If all of it is the best money can buy, several years, possibly as few as three."

"A long time to cut yourself off from humanity," Blackburn observed.

"That happened years ago," Dutro chuckled hollowly, rising to leave.

HE COULD not remember when the ink had been cleansed from his hands. He stepped from the elevator into the lobby of the Transport Tower and looked wonderingly at his fingertips. They smelled faintly of benzol. The almost-invisible secretary

must have done it, he decided. He began to realize how great his leap of joy and anticipation had been at the closing of the deal. He was free in a way he had never dreamed.

It was not the spate of money, even though his salary as director of the research project was on a par with the millions the electronic brain would cost to build. No, it was his final and tangible triumph over the idea that the human mind was an admirable instrument that filled him with joy. He watched the crowded sidewalk, speculating whether the number of atoms in the universe was any greater than the number of mistaken judgments the minds before him were capable of. He was above hatred for their frailty. His new powers had placed him, for the first time in the history of mankind, in position to extend the powers of humanity beyond the limited scope of the human brain. It was godlike, he decided.

In one brilliant stroke he had remade humanity, peopling it with supermen. A surge of resentment welled briefly in him at the thought that the mob on the pavement showed him no appreciation. But his magnanimity in that moment of triumph was great enough to excuse it, condone it on the grounds of their faulty mental apparatus. No more faulty than his own, he reflected sadly, as he walked to a cab stand. *Or was it?* He, Dutro, was the only human great enough to see past his own incompetence.

He warmed at that thought. It was true, after all, that the only judgment was the negative judgment. It mattered not that one thing was equal to another thing—the great fact, the great discovery was that it *was not equal to a third*. And only he, Dutro, had been able to make that great discrimination about the processes of human mentation.

Dutro did not see Giddons again until her plastic surgery had healed. Going to the rendezvous they had arranged in a distant city, he found she

had artfully contrived to alter the lines of her rugged, masculine body by the addition of padding to her clothing. She gave the appearance of being plump—almost fat—Dutro observed as he walked across the restaurant to her. The disguise was so complete that he would not have known her, had it not been for his recollection of the shape of her muscular calf. He reflected wryly that it was probably the first time in twenty years that any man had been interested in Giddons' calf.

THE SURGERY had certainly not made her any more beautiful, although it had softened and aged the lines of her face. There was a comfortable middle-aged look to her that Dutro knew for sham.

They took a booth together.

"How have things gone, Giddons?"

Dutro asked, his face lowered in the menu. He knew she needed no comment on her appearance; she would know his silence for approval.

"Well. The cartel's real-estate staff has picked property near Carson Sink, in Nevada. It has the most stable humidity in the United States. Austin Company will do the contracting work. The heavy electrical contracts will be split among the Big Three in the manner you suggested. They *should* be unable—unless they compare notes very closely—to make any reasonable guess as to the purpose of the equipment. Machinery to make the secret parts is already on order, split between a number of firms." She half turned away from him as she spoke, and her colorless lips barely moved.

"Have you had trouble getting action from the cartel?" Dutro wanted to know.

"Not yet. I will; they treat me as if I were a woman."

"Which you are," Dutro reminded her dutifully, although reserving a small personal doubt.

"True. But I'd rather be treated otherwise."

"No doubt," Dutro said wryly. "Giddons, you were a faultless assistant in the preparatory phases of this work. You must be my right hand these next two years. I shall make the major decisions, but you must execute them. Without your peculiar abilities, we could not handle this project in this manner. By the way, any reason to think Bowditch has connected your activities with me, or you with the Giddons he knows?"

"None."

"Good. I shall trust you to handle all work until Austin is done with the building, and shan't see you until my private apartments in it are complete." He rose to go.

"Dutro," Giddons said.

"Yes?"

"The auditors want to know to whom they should pay the salary of Director of the project."

The tall psychologist's face broke into a cadaverous grin. "To your order, of course. I trust you with my life's work; certainly I can trust you with mere money."



DUTRO WAS able. The millions the cartel was willing to invest in his research had not been allocated by whim. The best advice had agreed that Dutro had devised something bewilderingly ahead of his time, and that he was capable of executing the design he had so marvelously drawn.

His ability transcended any particular kind of problem. The gigantic leap from the ivory tower to running a huge construction program was made with scarcely a false step. He had an uncanny knack for picking an able man, giving him a concrete and challenging job, and leaving him alone

to solve it, being still wise enough to stand staunchly behind the failures of his subordinates. Without fanfare—and through the means of Giddons—he was a driver, in the best sense of the word. He drove men to their finest effort, gauging what was within the powers of each, and not calling for more.

Giddons was the finest example of his ability to develop talent. Behind the expressionless facade of her altered features, the staff of the rapidly building electronic brain soon found a keen mind, if a cool heart. From Dutro she got the sense of when to goad and when to encourage. The staff knew her only as the Assistant Director; encumbered as they were in a dozen other ways by the extreme security regulations of the project, they found it not strange never to deal with the chief of the whole effort.

There were others; the cartel itself found Dutro brilliant men. Electronic technicians they hired to his order. The whole elaborate machinery of a colossus of modern business was at his disposal, and Dutro used it wisely.

But nothing so complicated is quickly done. Even Dutro's patience—strengthened by his supreme confidence in the success of the electronic brain—was strained as the second year of his voluntary imprisonment within the project drew to a close. Giddons' was the only human face he had seen since his windowless, self-contained suite had been finished.

They sat together in the small dining alcove over a meal Dutro had cooked, reviewing progress.

Giddons laid down a sheet of paper. Her bland, rounded face seemed not to have weathered beyond the age given it three years before by the surgeon's knife; her voice was as impersonal as ever. By now Dutro automatically thought of her as a large, middle-aged woman, almost fat.

"Michalis says they are in the final stage. The condenser circuits from

Philco were much better than expected; the balancing is going nicely."

"The final stage," Dutro snapped. "We've been in the final stage for weeks. How much longer?"

Her gesture was the faintest suggestion of a shrug. There was never an excessive movement. "A day. At most a week."

"Good." He looked up. "Anything else?"

"Yes. Bowditch has written to the Project Director, asking an interview."

Dutro allowed his stern visage to crease in the vertical seams that meant he was smiling. "Took him long enough," he chuckled hollowly; "well, let him come."

BOWDITCH must have flown to Nevada, Dutro reflected, for he arrived within hours of Giddons' telegram to him. Outside of the slight, mild physicist, no accurate guess had been made by outsiders of the purpose of the great construction in the desert. Only the power of the cartel had kept Congress from investigating the secret effort and smothered the fears of foreign General Staffs that the project housed a new engine of atomic destruction.

Dutro sometimes regretted the need for secrecy. He wished the scientific world could know the attempt to transcend the limits of the human mind by a devising of a human mind. Dutro relished the paradox of his aim, but his semantic discipline told him it was no paradox, even if Bowditch thought so.

Dutro's office, in his windowless suite within the huge project building, reflected his academic background. He had not surrounded himself with the pelf what was Blackburn's. His quarters were Spartan, although efficient and adequate in every way for his responsibilities. He could feel that Bowditch was at his ease there.

The physicist spoke. "Dutro, I want you to know that not one soul knows why I am here, or what I ex-

pected to find here. I have been faithful to your request."

Dutro's smile was almost warm. "You were the only one I would trust with as much as I did," he replied. "I suppose you have often wondered where I was?"

"Yes," said Bowditch. "But I made no special effort to find you. It was not until the papers had made so many mentions of this fantastically-secret project, backed by no one knew whom, that I guessed this was your electronic brain." Dutro's long, lean head moved thoughtfully up and down. "How far have you gotten with it?" Bowditch went on.

"Nearly through," Dutro told him.

"Does the Brain occupy this entire enormous structure?" Bowditch asked him.

"Yes," Dutro replied. "Except for this small wing which contains my quarters and our administrative offices."

Bowditch looked around him. "I missed Giddons," he observed; "has she left you?"

Dutro shook his head and grinned at the joke of it. "No. You walked right past her. She is in hiding, like me. Our security precautions were thorough, believe me, Bowditch."

"I do," said the physicist. "But the reason I came here transcended my curiosity about this project. Dutro, I have thought often of what you said to me when you left the University. Often. I have never seen my semantic difficulty. Can you tell me more about this research? You should know now you can trust my discretion."

DUTRO'S face was a hard mask of concentration. "You refer, of course," he asked, "to the specific problem of calculating the fields required to nullify gravity?"

"Yes."

"Very well. When you said that the energy required to nullify gravity would at least be equal to the work done by that nullification, you were

guilty of three fundamental semantic errors. In the first place, in your mind you identified the idea of nullifying gravity with that of lifting mass *against* gravity. Those things are not the same. The negative judgment must be employed; a discrimination is required. Your second error was to identify gravity with an attraction between objects having mass, on the Newtonian basis. That is perfectly operable hypothesis in a three-dimensional world, but not in our space-time continuum. And there was your third error. You identified the three-dimensional world, in which your experience appears to take place, with the four-dimensional space-time continuum in which existence occurs."

Bowditch's puzzlement was written plain on his face. "I don't follow you."

"Of course not," Dutro sneered. "If you had, you would have solved this problem for yourself. Very simply, it is this: From the standpoint of a four-dimensional space-time continuum, the phenomenon we call 'gravity' can be treated as a distortion in space-time occasioned by the presence of mass. The orbits of the planets, to take a simple case, are geodesics in *space-time*, but we treat them as ellipses in three-dimensional space.

"What is the inference? A field which could remove that distortion would in effect nullify, in the three-dimensional world in which experience takes place, the phenomenon of gravity. I shall call upon the Brain to compute, from all data on four-dimensional space-time, a field which will rectify that distortion. You were wrong in thinking that the nullification of gravity necessarily involves the performance of work. The Brain will be called on to compute a field which will do no work." Dutro stopped, his bony fingers pointed out into space in an evocative gesture.

Bowditch sat in silence. "I underestimated you, Dutro," he said at last. "But I remain confident of two things. They make me believe, without my being able to tell you the pro-

cess of thought that yields these conclusions, that you cannot succeed."

"An intuition, then?" Dutro carped.

"Call it what you will," Bowditch replied evenly, rising to leave. "In the first place, my confidence in the human mind as the ultimate power of creation is unshaken, no matter how strongly you put the case that an electronic brain is superior. Secondly, it can only be a paradox, even if we cannot see it, that the human mind



can contrive a machine which can accomplish things of which that mind is by its nature incapable." He turned to the door, but stopped with his hand on the knob.

"I guess," he went on softly. "I guess this is all another way of putting an idea that is almost mystical. The feeling that anyone with a pride as great as yours must sustain a fall."

"Pride?" Dutro snapped. "I cannot understand that epithet. If anyone is more humble about the inadequacies of humanity than I am..."

"Of course," Bowditch said, smiling sadly. "I did not think you could understand. And your difficulty is not semantic; the irony is, my dear psychologist, that it is psychological." He left, but Dutro sat silently for long minutes behind him, unable to penetrate his remark.

HIS REVERIE was broken by the huzz of his communicator box. "Yes?" he said, depressing the switch.

"The calibration staff reports they are finished," he heard Giddons' featureless voice say. "You said you wished to go personally to the data room."

Dutro's stomach twisted in momentary fear, now that the test was at

last at hand. "I will go with you," he said, his deep baritone voice firm as always. "Have Michalis wait. I wish to meet him."

"Kyoto, too?" asked Giddons.

"Yes."

Dutro felt a twinge of agoraphobia as he left the familiar confines of his suite. The two calibration experts were standing at Giddons' desk. She rose as Dutro came forward, bending a little from his height as he reached to shake their hands perfunctorily.

"This is Dutro," she said without obvious feeling. "Chief of the Project. The usual security regulations apply. Mention of his name or existence will call for immediate punitive action against your posted bond and the retained portion of your compensation."

"Well?" asked Dutro.

"It is done," said Michalis, blanching slightly at the vigor of Dutro's gaze.

"We are completely ready?" Dutro asked Giddons. She nodded briefly. Her large body stood perfectly motionless, solid and plump with its padding. But only she kept effortlessly with Dutro's impatient pace down the corridor to the huge windowless room at the heart of the building where data was fed to the Brain and where the required answers could be called for.

Giddons was at home there. Dutro had originally hired her years before because of her reputation in time and motion studies for manual switchboards. Her skills were paramount here. She moved effortlessly to her large chair before the main bank of controls. Before her were the switchboards and punchtape machines at which the operators sat. The full crew of women was present.

Dutro cast his eye farther about the room. It was completely walled in black insullite panels, divided in a sort of gridwork. Each panel supported hundreds of spindles on which the data spools were to be impaled. Ver-

nier controls studded functionally from the insullite below each spindle. Light alloy ladders on rails that ran around the room enabled the operators to scale the walls to insert data spools.

The spindles were largely empty. Dutro turned back to Giddons.

"What data has been fed the Brain?" he asked her curtly.

"Everything relating to the four-dimensional space-time continuum. As other sectors were pronounced balanced by Michalis here, I have had the operators punch out data tapes on various unrelated subjects, and have had their impulses recorded in the memory circuits. Of course, all propositions of mathematics have been provided."

Dutro smiled with satisfaction, and turned to Michalis. "You know, my friend of a few moments," he said, "we are at a moment of history. My sense of the dramatic, and of my own importance in history is sufficiently well-developed to know that I am called upon to do something deathless." He turned to Giddons, who was observing him with expressionless closeness.

"Giddons, what is the sum of two and two?" he asked.

"Four," she replied, without thinking.

"That may very well be," Dutro responded smilingly; "see if the electronic brain agrees with your protoplasmic apparatus."

It created a little ruffle. The punch-tape operator shifted as she set up the simple problem. The tape was placed on its spindle. Dutro stood over the "Start" button. Kyoto took a tiny camera from his pocket that whirled in recording the scene. The red "Running" light flashed when Dutro depressed the stud. There was a measurable interval as the "reject" circuits clicked, denoting decisions on the part of the Brain as to what answers were *not* the right one. Dutro

recalled vaguely that this sort of problem was solved by an appeal to the theory of prime numbers, and that the Brain would take as long to perform this simple sum as to add any imaginable quantity of figures.

WITHIN ten seconds, the red light had winked out, and the green "Answer" light came on. Giddons removed the spool bearing the answer tape from the spindle on her desk and swiveled to feed it into the interpreter. It clacked briefly as it typed the answer in triplicate. One of the punch-tape operators rose half out of her chair in the tense silence that followed its halt, as if to see the result from ten meters away.

Giddons drew the typed sheet from the machine, tore it off on a serrated cutting edge and handed the original to Dutro.

He read: "*Arithmetic. Simple algebraic sum. Two plus two. Sum, four.*"

He raised his eyes to the others. "There you have it. We now know that two and two are four." He stepped forward one pace and held out his hand to the expressionless Giddons. "This is a moment for mutual congratulation," he said. She took his hand without emotion.

"Giddons," Dutro said, his tone resonant. "Will you please feed in the tape for the First Problem." He felt himself capitalize the words. Again he pressed the start stud. The red light lit. The great room burst into sound as the multifarious clatter of reject relays swelled to a crescendo, thousands of them clicking together in a sound more reminiscent of a hive of bees than any other.

Minutes passed. The reject clatter did not diminish. Dutro lifted his eyebrows briefly. "Even at electronic speeds," he announced. "I believe this problem will require some weeks of the Brain's thought." He led Giddons back to her office.



HERE DUTRO was, in a sense wrong. His discovery of his mistake came in Bowditch's presence. The physicist had not left Nevada, and called on Dutro for the second time only two days after his first visit. He could not restrain his impatience beyond the first brief greeting. "Have you gotten any results?" he demanded.

Duro seethed inwardly. His outward calm was greater than ever, and his words came slowly, almost insultingly. "We seem to have a five-hundred batting average as of this morning," he revealed. "One problem has been solved; the second is still being mulled over by the Brain, and I suppose it will be a couple weeks before we know what kind of progress it is making with it."

"You do have one result, then?"

"Oh, yes. We know that two and two are four."

Bowditch showed his uncertainty. "You are serious?"

Dutro wished he could swear, but he refused to give Bowditch any comfort. "Yes. That was the first problem; the answer took ten seconds. The problem of nullifying gravity has taken two days, so far."

"It is not finished?" Bowditch asked anxiously.

"No. The Brain is still thinking."

Bowditch lowered his gaze for some moments, concentration creasing his forehead. "I am as great a friend—at least on the intellectual plane—as you have in this world. But I am worried for you. And you must listen to me. You are anthropomorphising that machine; it doesn't 'mull' and it doesn't 'think.' It computes, it calculates. My friend, I think you have finally found the concrete limit of the power of the

human mind. Your failure here..."

"Failure!" Dutro shouted.

Bowditch shrugged. "What else? I say that your failure here shows that the human mind cannot contrive a machine which can solve a problem beyond the power of that mind!"

"Mysticism!" Dutro snorted, but for the first time his confidence was shaken. The subdued buzz of the communicator box burst in on their silence.

Dutro removed his blazing glance from Bowditch long enough to lean toward the box. "Yes?" he said.

"Giddons, on two," said the secretary who had replaced Giddons as his window to the outside world.

Dutro pressed the selector button.

"What is it?" he snapped into the phone.

"The reject relays in sectors four thirty-eight and seven forty-one are quiet," he heard Giddons say. Without a word he hung up.

"Come with me!" he ordered Bowditch. The smaller man trotted to keep up with the psychologist's long stride.

When they arrived in the great, black-panelled room the diminution of sound was immediately apparent to Dutro.

"Several other sectors have stopped rejecting," Giddons told them. Dutro and Bowditch found chairs. The beehive humming of the relays was still there, but as more and more sectors of the Brain were satisfied with its computations, the humming began to ebb, and soon the individual clicks of the nearer relays could be heard above the general clatter.

Quite suddenly the whole room was silent but for one relay, far down the black board. Its click-click-click sounded evenly, like the ticking of a fine watch. Its tiny noisiness seemed interminable. Dutro had a short moment of doubt that it had really stopped when its clicking ceased.

The red light died and the green flashed above Giddons' desk. She

looked at Dutro, hands still on her controls.

He signalled her to procede. She removed the answer tape reel from its spindle before her and fed it into the interpreter. For some minutes it clacked, falling silent after it had typed less than thirty lines. Giddons pulled the broad tape farther from the slot, tore the three coples on the serrated edge. Dutro frowned as he took the original from her.

"It should not have been so simple," he said, half to himself. Bowditch bowed his head over the sheet in unashamed curiosity. Four complex electrical integrals had been written by the interpreter.

The physicist shook his head. "Whatever these equations are," he said, "will need another machine to determine. They have no relation to any known system of which I have the slightest knowledge. You have failed after all," he said to Dutro.

GIDDONS had half-risen from her chair. The slightest frown creased between her eyes. At a gesture from Dutro she sank back, looking plump, middle-aged and emotionless.

"I am reminded of Achilles," Dutro said, leaning back in his chair and allowing a smile to purse his chiselled lips. "Was it not his mother who asked an oracle how to proof him against wounds? And did not the oracle tell her to dip him in a pool? And did she not do so—but hold him by the heel? And did he not die of a wound in that heel and she therefore fail? Why? Because the advice of the oracle was bad? Certainly not: Because her question was not complete, or because she failed to understand the answer, which is the same thing."

Hooking his arm over the back of the seat, he swung around to face Bowditch. "What we have here is a specialized solution of the Brain, one that produced nullification of gravity without the attendant performance of work. This equation, Bowditch, must

therefore be one of a family of equations relating to the nullification of gravity under varying conditions of performance of work. A better question will give us the family, all the equations, and from the whole group we can construct the new mathematical discipline needed to implement them."

He stood up. "Giddons, you and I have much work to do." His assistant rose and followed him and Bowditch back to Dutro's office.

Dutro's evaluation had been good. A newly-prepared question-tape, when at last readied, drew forth the same all-prevailing clatter of reject relays when the start stud was pressed. After ten days of mentation, during which Giddons scarcely left the controls lest new settings be required at some critical level of mentation in the final stages of the problem, the electronic brain had so little satisfied itself, that not one relay had yet ceased to reject solutions.



Bowditch was a constant caller, learning from day to day that the Brain continued to calculate. He was there when the first relay fell silent, and still there, days later, when the final three relays chattered in a stuttery rhythm of indecision for interminable hours. And, along with Dutro, he watched the decisive part Giddons played in those hours, as tell-tales rang and lit over her complex board. Her movements were so economical and yet so swift that Dutro half-believed she anticipated the signals of her panel.

But at last it was done. This time the answer-tape, when fed into the

interpreter, drew forth solid hours of typing. When Giddons finally removed several feet of typed tape from the machine, and handed the first copy to Dutro, she, Dutro and Bowditch had completed a vigil through two nights and a day.

THE TENSION was not broken by Bowditch's long perusal of the hundreds of integral equations that were listed in an apparent kind of order on the tape. The physicist shook his head.

"I am stunned," he said. "Dutro, I do not know whether to be more in awe of you or this machine you have created. You were right about the equations; the last four on this long sheet are the same as the four indecipherable integrals the machine wrote when the problem was first given to it. I take it there are either four ways to nullify gravity without work, or that four fields must be generated."

"These equations make sense to you, then?" Dutro asked. "I must confess that electrical integrals of this nature are beyond me."

Bowditch turned to the psychologist, his hands outstretched. "Some sense," he admitted. "The first two equations are known to us all. The third is a derivation of the boldest sort, but my preliminary reaction is that it makes complete sense. As to the rest, they seem to follow a pattern, but they are so divorced from any mathematics I have ever dealt with that I would need days of study to evaluate them."

He paused. "How will you use them?" he asked, painfully telling Dutro by his question that he had no doubt the equations were in fact the answer Dutro had so long sought.

Dutro had anticipated that pleasure, and his dreamy smile showed it. "I have waited long, and planned carefully, for this moment," he said. "These equations will be turned over to the most brilliant staff of electronic

engineers ever recruited, who will convert their mathematical symbolism into the apparatus required to produce the indicated fields. It is a job in its own way as complicated as the creation of the Brain was in its. And I imagine the Brain will be kept more than busy on the subsidiary problems in this job, interesting as it might be to turn it loose on many of the other mysteries. Mysteries," he said, turning back to Bowditch. "That are so only because we poor humans are incapable of piercing the thin veil hiding the truth."



Dutro was wrong in his estimate of the difficulty of building the generators described by the equations the Brain had written. Once the new discipline had been absorbed by the electronic engineers, the fabrication of field generators was comparatively an easy job. Long beforehand, Dutro had known the configuration he wanted the equipment to take. He had not known how bulky the generators would be, nor the power needed to run them. To his delight, the completed equipment took the form he had hopefully envisaged, a simple sphere of a hard cobalt-tungsten-nickel alloy, barely six meters in diameter. In addition to its power supply and the generators, the sphere had room within for a crew of two and minimum facilities for a stay within its shell of a few days. Dutro envisaged it as nothing less than a craft—one that soon would be capable of navigating space. As a result, its equipment included what he considered the minimum to permit navigation beyond the atmosphere, and emergency equipment in case it were necessary to abandon the craft.

As Dutro had expected, the Brain had been essential in many of the subsidiary calculations. While he was confident that the effective radius of the field generators was exactly that of the alloy sphere, the whole theory

was so untested that care was indicated in the first trials.



WITH CO-OPERATION from Government agencies, due to the influence of the cartel, use of one of the atomic proving grounds was secured, and equipment for the test moved there by steamer. Bowditch was one of the few outsiders whom Dutro let come with the small test crew.

After days of preparation, the two scientists stood together on the glaring coral sand as Giddons made last preparations with the controls she was to handle during the test.

"What do you expect the physical manifestation of the test will be?" Bowditch asked.

"Probably you will see several things," Dutro confessed. "The significance of that family of equations was quite remarkable, Bowditch. They indicate a sequence of fields which can be penetrated to nullify progressively greater portions of gravity. It appears that, in total, four fields must be generated, and the mixing of their properties is what controls the amount of gravity nullified. We have generated the fields individually, with no result. No three together have any result. That was all predicted by the Brain, in answer to questions.

"Because we cannot frame questions that seem to make sense to the Brain, however, we have not been able to get any idea of the physical manifestations. In the first test, we have decided to nullify gravity completely, within the limit of the efficiency of the generators, which we think is very high indeed, if not one hundred percent.

"If that succeeds, we will try some of the partial-nullification conditions." He smiled. "I rather think you

will see the sphere shoot upward at a tangent as it flies away, completely cut off from gravity. At least, I trust you will."

"I hope so," Bowditch replied. He held out his hand. "I want to say this before your great triumph, my friend, not afterward," he said in a kindly tone. "I have been wrong throughout this project; I admit it now. You are even greater than I knew."

Dutro took his hand. "Thank you," he said. "I rather think you should get aboard the helicopter. I think Giddons is ready; she just stuck her head out the lock."

Dutro entered the sphere, crouching his tallness to turn to seal the lock. He worked his way carefully in the cramped space to his heavily padded seat beside Giddons. She was already at her control panel, securely strapped in her seat. Dutro looked at her in amazement. She was positively thin.

"What happened to you?" he demanded.

"Had you forgotten, too?" she asked. "It was hard for me to believe when I saw it. But I could see no need for my padding any more. I am wearing some of my old clothes."

"You look amazingly young," Dutro said gallantly as he fastened his harness.

"All but my face," she agreed. "And I shall grow into that. Time passes quickly."

IN A ROUTINE they had practiced many times before, they made a check of the instruments, and brought the field generators up to power. Dutro laid his hand on the switch, as the signal came that all observers were at a safe distance. Far above the coral atoll radio-controlled aircraft recorded the scene by television and direct photography.

"Ready?" Dutro asked.

"Yes," Giddons said.

"Just in case," Dutro said haltingly. "I have enjoyed working with you."

"And so have I," Giddons replied evenly.

Dutro closed the switch. He was instantly weightless, and knew from her slight gasp that Giddons felt the same. There had been no transition, no acceleration or deceleration. He switched on the kintroscope and looked in the television screen before him. The lens reported an all-pervading blackness. Tiny flecks of light speckled the fluorescent screen as stray electrons leaking from the field generating equipment impinged on its coating. He surveyed all six directions with equal lack of success.

The phenomenon did not disturb him. What the physical sensations would be, he had been unable to determine from the Brain. They would either be fatal, or not. They were not.

He turned to Giddons, who sat motionless at her panel. Her expressionless face might be slightly pale, Dutro thought. So, perhaps, was his, he was forced to admit to himself.

"Feel all right?" he asked.

"I am becoming oriented to the weightlessness," she said. "For a while..." She made a moue.

Dutro knew how she felt. Every involuntary reflex associated with the idea of falling had leapt at the onset of weightlessness. The sensation of interminable fall was beginning to wear off as the conscious mind began to assert its dominance over the instinctive patterns of a lifetime.

"What is happening?" Giddons asked him.

"My sensations tell me we have nullified gravity. Your instruments say we have; they all seem to read zero."

"That's so," she replied. "That means you have been completely successful?"

"Yes. Have you ever doubted it?"

A slow smile warmed her features, a most unusual occurrence, thought Dutro. "No," she said, her voice colored for once by what Dutro thought was

almost an expression of admiration. "Nothing is beyond you."

Dutro was reluctant to switch off the generators. By his figuring, upon the nullification of gravity the alloy sphere had shot upwards at a tangent to the Earth's surface. He was not anxious to have it fall heavily back to Earth when the power was cut, and thus allowed the generators to produce their nullifying fields for many minutes. They might need time for maneuvering, with various degrees of gravity nullified when it came to the landing.

Dutro watched the stop-clock. When ten minutes had elapsed, he switched off the generators. There was no change in sensation. They were in free fall, in a world of gravity, Dutro knew, and thus unable to feel that gravity. He switched on the television again to determine their whereabouts. Earth was nowhere in sight. There was no outside air pressure, although his reckoning told him that the sphere could not have passed beyond the Earth's atmosphere in ten minutes.

"Where are we?" Giddons asked.

DUTRO looked across at her. "In deep space," he said tersely. He pointed at the screen. A wealth of stars was pinpointed against the velvet blackness of space with unwinking splendor. Switching from one to the other of the six directions, he at last located a sun.

"The Sun?" asked Giddons.

"I don't know," Dutro said. A heavy feeling bore down on his head. "It appears much too ruddy, much older in stellar evolution than Sol. We may have travelled an unbelievable distance." He frowned mightily as he scanned the heavens for one familiar sight.

"None of the constellations are familiar," he said at last. "And I would have supposed I could recognize some of them, at least, from any point within our Galaxy."

He tried one view after another of

the surrounding cosmos. "Still," he mused aloud, for Giddons' benefit, "there is the Milky Way, much as I remember it. That argues that we are still in our own Gaaxy, and I would hazzard, much where we started. Hm," he said, and fell silent.

"That last doesn't jibe with this business of no familiar constellations, does it?" he asked Giddons, trying to grin. He could feel it was a weak attempt.

Dutro was no astronomer, but his logical powers were great enough to locate four planets that seemed to fill the places of Venus, Earth, Mars and Jupiter fairly well. No planet could he locate in the former orbit of Mercury. He wondered whether the red cast of the sun he observed was due to malfunctioning of the television, and cast the thought aside when he recalled the blue-white brilliance of the distant stars. He returned to a view of the Milky Way.

"Notice," he said to his silent companion, "the Milky Way seems tilted at a sharp angle to the plane of the ecliptic, assuming that this is our own solar system. That's not right."

That's not right! Of course not. It was the other way around. *The plane of the ecliptic was tilted at a sharp angle to the central plane of the Galaxy.* He said that out loud to Giddons, and his instant perception was that such a tilting required an almost unthinkable period of time. Thousands, no, millions of years. He sat transfixed trying to determine the order of magnitude of the time that had elapsed. Billions of years, he decided.

He had been silent many minutes. Giddons was regarding him with transparent concern.

"Giddons," he said. "I must think. For a long time. I am conscious and well. Pardon my silence." He looked briefly at her, and noticing faint marks of concern, went on in a more kindly tone. "I am sorry. We are in no immediate danger; we are in some sort

of an orbit about the sun we have observed, and our distance from it leads me to believe it is elliptical."

She accepted his apology with a lowering of her eyelids, and continued to sit quietly beside him at her controls, regarding his furrowed features. The implications of his discovery of the enormous lapse of time kept Dutro occupied for the better part of an hour.

"Yes, Giddons," he said at last, and his voice was heavy with defeat. "In the final analysis, Bowditch was right on every count."

HE TURNED in his padded seat to look sorrowfully at her. "He told me the Brain did not think; it computed. It answered my questions truly, but it could not tell me the implications of the answers. Its ability to extend the powers of the human mind was limited by the ability of that mind to frame a significant question."

His smile became more wan. "And now I know what Bowditch meant by my pride, and that for it I must fall. Giddons, my realization of the flaws in the process of human mentation—which I sought to correct in the Brain—never extended to an honest admission of the flaws of my own. Whether because I thought I could create a machine that could think without a flaw, or for some other reason, I have all along felt myself above other men. For that baseless pride, Giddons, you and I have been cut off from all mankind. It is a rather fitting end." He sighed heavily, his long, dark face lined with mingled emotions of defeat and remorse.

"From what I can tell from the surface of the Sun, Giddons," he went on more briskly. ("For there is no doubt in my mind that it is Old Sol, nearly ten billion years elapsed since we left Earth.) The Sun is in its dying stages, rapidly coming to the end of its carbon-nitrogen cycle. By this time it has probably gone through

a half-dozen dying surges. I would suppose the Solar System to be a sterile, devoid of life except our own. Certainly when Mercury fell into the Sun, the disturbance must have killed all life on the inner planets." He stopped and held his palms out to her.

"It is wrong that you had to pay this price, too," he said gently.

Giddons straightened in her chair.



"If what you say is true, about the passage of time," she said, "I admit we are in trouble. But how do you explain it?"

Dutro laughed a little. "That is the most foolish part of the whole business," he said. "The machine could have told us this, if I had asked it to. But I was semantically blocked; I foolishly identified 'time in a gravitational field' with 'time outside a gravitational field'. It appears they are not the same. In effect, we have accomplished time travel, I never had a name for the gravity equations before, but I have now. They were the Achronic Equations; they eliminated 'Time'. If gravity is a manifestation of mass in a four-dimensional space-time continuum, the nullification of gravity in the presence of mass must occur only by the nullification of 'time'."

GIDDONS considered his remarks for many minutes. "I believe you are right," she said at last. "But why, if we nullified time, could we come back at all?"

Dutro's jaw dropped with surprise. He looked at her long and earnestly, his astonishment giving way to a kind of awe. "You, at least, have no semantic blocks," he told her. "The negative judgement; the critical discrimination. You are right; we did not completely

nullify gravity, in spite of our effort to do so—else we would be at the end of 'time'. The healthy number of stars in the Galaxy tells us differently." He fell silent, looking at her with an intensity he had never shown before.

"Giddons," he said. "Bowditch told me my pride would have to be abased. I sit before you now more humble than in any moment of my life. Can you understand why?"

She shook her head slowly. "No, I cannot," she replied.

Dutro smiled as he unfastened part of his harness. "You have in you, Giddons, powers that can never be within me. You, and you alone, represent the chance to evade death. You are the repository of all life. Without you, death is sure. Without me, you could, in all likelihood, sustain life." His smile had broadened.

"You follow me?" he asked.

"No."

"Giddons, how old are you?" Dutro demanded.

"Thirty-seven," she said.

"You are fertile?"

"I presume so; at least I'm in good health. Why?"

Dutro beamed at her. "The process of creation, whether of humans or of Suns, is repetitive. Our Sun is reaching its old age. It will soon collapse in on itself, when its hydrogen has been completely converted to helium, and burst forth with an enormous amount of dying energy. It will be a nova. In cooling, it will form new planets, for the present ones will be volatilized. It will cool again comparatively quickly, but there should be a period of hundreds of millions of years when temperatures will be right to support life on some of its planets.

"Giddons, without me, and by processes that I suppose you are familiar with in theory at least, you can have children, but only daughters. With me, you can have sons as well. Giddons, I am making an honorable proposal of

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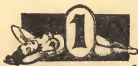


"Pterodactyl!",
thought Teraf,
grabbing for
his dress-sword.
"I'm done for!"

THY DAYS ARE

NUMBERED!

Feature Novelet of the Great Legend
By Wallace West



There were giants in the earth in those days and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men and they bare children unto them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

Genesis, 6-4.

TERAF, Prince of Hellas, pressed his nose against a promenade deck porthole of the *Poseidon* as the liner drifted earthward at the end of her record-break-

They were the lords from the sky, the beneficent rulers of this new world. But they forgot that half-savage barbarians did not have the same high principles they themselves had — or that humans are rarely grateful for being saved from the errors of their ways. Particularly when the benefactors are obviously getting something out of it!

ing run. Within half an hour the *Poseidon* would be docked at Atlan, but she was still so high that the capital of colonial Atlantis looked like a white button on the green silk of the Mediterranean valley.

Far to the east, Teraf could just make out the brown deserts of Arabia; northward were the mountains of his own Hellas, and he thought he glimpsed the marble porticos of Athens gleaming in the sunlight. To the westward, on the very edge of the horizon, lay a faint blue line which must be the Atlantic coast. The prince strained his eyes in an effort to catch sight of the mammoth dam between the Pillars of Heracles, but the distance was too great. Over all that expanse, masses of thunderheads were drifting, for it was the season of summer showers.



"Probably get a wetting when we land," Teraf commented idly to a passenger who had preempted a nearby porthole.

"Think of it," chirped the other, who looked like a college professor back from vacation. "And we had to beg for bath-water on Mars. Ah, if only they had some of this precipitation there!" The little fellow moved to a better vantage point, and Teraf was left to his own reflections.

"Same old town," he mused, staring down at the marble towers, fairy gardens and circular canals which were now hidden, now revealed by the hurrying clouds. "Same old people, too, I'll bet. Zeus Pitar's gout will be a little worse than when I left. Hera will be a little fatter but still fussing with her court receptions. Aphrodite? Well..." He gasped and grabbed for a stanchion as the *Poseidon's* pilot, deciding to risk the storm, allowed the ship to drop like a rock into the fleecy darkness of the clouds.

In a moment they were through. Now, Atlan lay close beneath, wet and shining, like a newly-cleansed jewel. Then the thousand-foot-long ship bumped gently on its runway and came to a rest with a groan like that of a tired living thing.

The doors of the promenade deck unscrewed with a sigh of compressed air. Earth-hungry passengers began screaming out on the dock followed by puffing stewards. That, of course, was the moment when the clouds opened and sent sheets of rain sweeping across the unprotected drome.

Pulling his helmet down over his red hair and swinging his elbows ruthlessly, Teraf tried to dodge through the crowd and escape the committee which, he was sure, Hera had sent to

welcome him. But it was no use; an officer whom he had failed to bribe pointed him out, and a group of officials in bedraggled scarlet cloaks drew themselves up before him.

"Welcome, Prince Teraf of Hellas!" proclaimed the spokesman, a dried-up wisp of humanity whom the new arrival remembered vaguely as Doctor Vanya, physician, high priest and official greeter of the Atlantean court. "Zeus Pitar sends his regrets that ill-health prevented his being here in person to welcome you and bids you wait upon him in the royal suite of the royal..."

"Hey, Prince! Prince!" someone was bawling above the roaring rain and the screams of the scurrying crowd. Then the owner of the voice, a lean and lanky youngster in civilian harness, thrust his dripping bronze figure through the mob and grabbed Teraf by the arm.

"Sorry, Prince," he apologized as Vanya and the other committee-men drew themselves up in soggy hauteur. "Hate to bother you, but I'm Hermes of the *Evening Planet*. The boys want a photograph and I want an interview. If you'll just step this way..."

Teraf somehow found himself facing a battery of lenses while the banter common to newspapermen the universe over, was tossed back and forth. "Have a rough crossing?" demanded one. "How's it feel to brush a comet's tail?"

"It never touched us," the prince laughed that one off.

"Do you think the comet will hit the earth?" chirped another reporter. "We understand..."

"You'll have to ask the captain that one," parried Teraf.

"Do you think Terran girls are prettier than..."

Hermes finally rescued the perspiring prince and returned him to the fidgeting reception committee, after exacting a promise for an exclusive interview.

UNDER THE wing of the fussy little doctor, the new arrival was hustled down a landing dock elevator and into the official car. Between polite comments to members of his escort as the car glided along its repulsion rails into the heart of the city, Teraf had time to survey the town. The ten years of his sojourn on Mars had made little appreciable change. Atlan still looked like the prosperous colonial capital it was, but the buildings of white marble were smaller and the streets narrower than he remembered them.

Also, the sprinkling of red-haired, tall and deep-chested Martians seemed almost lost in the press of blond Hellenes, dark-skinned Arabs and bearded Northmen which filled the sidewalks.

Teraf was especially struck by the appearance of the transplanted Martians and compared them unfavorably with the pale, graceful citizens back "home", as the red planet was always called. The rays of the earthly sun had burned their sensitive skins almost as black as those of the Nubians who occasionally wended their way through the crowds. And to meet the stress of Terran gravitation they had developed enormous muscles which sat poorly on their slender frames and gave them the deceitful appearance of strong men in a circus. In other words, they didn't quite fit.

The Alphas—those of mixed Martian and earthly parentage—apparently had absorbed the best traits of both races, he observed, tingling with pride because he was one of the latter. These Alphas, of whom there were a great number on the streets, had the blazing hair and slim grace of their Martian forebears, plus a better adaptation to earthly conditions.



The Crooked Mountain, on which the Pitar's palace was located, now loomed before them like a nightcap dropped on the plain. The silver trac-

ery of Bab El radio tower graced its summit like a spider's web—creamy structures in which beat the official heart of Atlantis peeped from amidst its olive groves.

As the car skimmed a bridge which spanned the second of the city's five circular canals, the prince caught sight of the race-course which was the pride of Atlan. The results of races there were even flashed to Mars; he had bet on them many a time.

Crossing another bridge, they swept into the business section with its colorful shops, block-square combines and squat, windowless warehouses. In the latter, he knew, were stored the price-less cargoes of merchandise which dropped upon Atlan from all corners of the earth for trans-shipment "home."

The fourth circle, which housed the barracks and parade grounds of the army, was not in that state of activity which characterized the rest of the city. The frowning marble fortresses, armed with their squat infra-heat guns, seemed almost deserted. Only a few guards loitered about the approaches to the last bridge.

A three-minute glide through carefully-tended parkland brought them to the Inner Island and to the pillared facade of the patraichal palace, from which Zeus ruled the world and conversed with the stars. Here there were soldiers in plenty, standing stiffly at attention in long lines at either side of the entrance. Through this lane of honor, Vanya and his fellows proudly escorted the prince into the reception hall.

Teraf's nose wrinkled a little at this ostentation. *That's what comes of having an ambitious, stupid wife*, he reflected, comparing the almost barbaric splendor of the chamber with the simple dignity of similar rooms at Minos, capital of the Martian Anarchiate. *Zeus must be coming more and more under Hera's influence. Time for a young man to take over the Pitarship if I know anything about it.*

But the prince's attitude changed somewhat when he saw that, except for a few officials who were passing busily back and forth, the reception room was empty. He was to be let off without a formal welcome then? He wondered.

WITH A FLOURISH, Dr. Vanya ushered him into the Pitar's private chamber and withdrew wistfully, leaving Teraf alone with the mighty Zeus himself. The Pitar was swathed in a toga of sky-blue silk and had his bad foot propped upon a padded stool. His secretary, a strikingly handsome youth, assisted him to arise when the visitor was announced.

"Welcome home, Teraf," the governor of Atlantis smiled through his bushy red beard as he limped forward with outstretched hands. "Remembering how you used to hate court occasions, I begged off this morning on account of my foot."

"Your gout is worse, then?" asked the prince to make conversation.

"It's damned painful. Wish I could get a leave of absence and go home for a while. This damp climate is killing me. . . . Apollo, get us a flagon of nectar, like a good boy."

As the secretary withdrew, Zeus slipped him arm around his visitor's shoulders and led him to a window-seat which overlooked the capital and the distance-misted mountains of Crete. The Pitar sank into the cushions with a grunt of relief and, picking up the jagged sceptre which was the symbol of his power, began tracing complicated patterns with it on the rug.

"You'll stay in your old room at the palace, of course," he said at last. "Glad you arrived in time to attend the reception and conclave of the ten governors of Atlantis tonight. The old summer solstice rigmarole—but I still have to give the barbarians pomp and circumstance, auguries and tokens,

ambrosia and horseraces or they become grumpy.

"That's really why I humor Hera when she wants to give a reception, you know; she thinks such things are necessary and she should know. At heart she's a barb. . . ." He stopped himself with a slight cough. "You'll not have to sit beside the altar tonight—unless that brother of yours fails to show up—so you can get away early.

"How are things back home?" Zeus changed the subject after a pause. There was wistfulness in his mellow bass voice.

"Just about the same," replied the prince, who was regaining that sense of ease with which, in his youth, he had conversed with his strange paradox of a Pitar, whose cleancut mouth was always ready to smile at a friend and whose bright little eyes could sparkle equally at a jest or the sight of a pretty woman.

"They're running a new canal from the South Pole to the Equator," Teraf continued. "I suppose you've read of it in the dispatches. Half a mile wide. It will use every drop of water from the ice cap. I worked on it all this year getting my engineering degree."

Zeus nodded, though his eyes were fastened anxiously on the window and the slowly clearing skies.

"It's a continual fight all the time. Everybody's on food and water rations now. Chemical food, mostly. Brrr! And Earth may be damp, but you should be glad you're down here where one doesn't have to send in a requisition in order to take a bath."

"Yes, life up there is a struggle," the Pitar admitted, "but it's no picnic down here either just now. We could use twice as many immigrants if they could be spared from the canal building. We're terribly short of soldiers, too—just when the natives are all worked up about this comet business. They think it's a portent. Someone—I don't know who—yet," his jaw tightened and he gave the rug a vi-

cious jab, "is trying to use their fear to break down confidence in the government. There's even talk of a revolution..."

"Nonsense," laughed Teraf, wondering suddenly if the old man was entering his dotage. "I'm sure..."

"I suppose," interrupted the Pitar, that observers on the *Poseidon* were watching the comet. What did they make of it?"



"Had them worried for a while." Teraf took one of the glasses of nectar which Apollo returned to proffer at that moment. "If we had been delayed, we might have been hit, you know; the comet is cutting right between the orbits of Mars and Earth. The ship set a new speed record on account of it. Three weeks and two days. Not bad for 90,000,000 miles."

ZEUZ NEGLECTED his own drink to peer out through the window from which the new celestial body could now be seen rising over the horizon. Its ruddy light was clearly visible, despite the fact that the sun was almost at the zenith. "Did the observers think there was any danger either to Earth or Mars?"

"They didn't think so. The comet has a considerable body of solid material in the head; in fact, it's about the size and density of Earth. But it should miss us by some 17,000,000 miles; at that distance it can only disturb the tides and perhaps alter our orbit a very little."

"Well if that's all," sighed the Pitar, "maybe there'll be no trouble." He gulped his drink and held out his glass for another. "Perhaps I shouldn't tell you this," he continued after waving his secretary away, "but

as next in line for the throne of Hellas, I think you ought to know." His widely-spaced grey eyes looked into Teraf's blue ones for a long moment.

"We're sitting on top of a volcano, my boy," he said at last. "I have made the mistake of thinking that Earthlings would appreciate the benefits they receive from our rule—better living conditions, education, longer life, no wars.

"Instead, they are a bunch of ungrateful brutes." His voice was bitter. "Excuse me—I know you're half Earthling—but I believe you can be trusted. As for your brother Refo—I don't know. I don't know." The Pitar brought himself up with a start.

"Enough of this," he grumbled, starting to rise and then subsiding with a groan as his foot protested. "You must want a bath in some of that water you feel so strongly toward. Just be sure you're on hand for the conclave, and keep your eyes and ears open. The ten governors should all be there. Your brother is flying in from Athens...why he couldn't have been here to greet you I don't know."

He touched a bell; Apollo returned and helped his master to arise. Zeus then escorted his guest to the door and turned him over to Vanya, who still hovered outside.

DEEP IN thought over what he had just heard, Teraf trudged slowly through the gracious, softly-illuminated halls. Things were not the same as when he had left Atlantis. He sighed and became conscious of the earth's gravitational pull.

It was the old story, he reflected; the same thing that had got Martians in trouble so many times before—assuming that half-savages were moved by the same high principles as themselves. He had read in history books of the first tragic attempt to colonize Earth, thousands of years before. And then there was the fiasco on Venus. Were the Martians too soft?

Too generous? Would they be left to smother gallantly on their little planet in the end? He thrust out his chin and startled Dr. Vanya by swearing that it would not be so this time if he could help it.

When they reached the well-remembered high carved door in the east wing, Vanya was all for coming in and making his prince comfortable with his own hands; Teraf succeeded in shooing him away and entered his room alone.

The apartment was vast, yet simple, and to his taste. He had often stayed there when, with his tall, silent father, he had paid his first visits to the capital. Teraf was startled out of his reverie by a voice issuing from a chair which had been drawn up before one of the windows. "Come in, prince," it said, "and make yourself at home, same as I have."

Reclining on the small of his back, with his feet on the window sill, a glass of nectar in one hand and a slice of ambrosia in the other was Hermes, he of the *Evening Planet*. His smile was so infectuous that Teraf found his somber humor lightening. It was impossible to be annoyed with this grinning, freckled intruder.

"I'd get up and tap my eyebrows if I were a gentleman," grumbled the reporter as he squinted at the prince, judging and weighing him through his mockery. "However, there are too many gentlemen in this dump as it is. Wipe the grime of space off your face and then pull up a chair; I want to talk."

A valet, who had been lurking in the background, now led the way to the bedroom where clean harness had been laid out and a bath drawn.

Returning half an hour later, Teraf found his guest apparently in deep slumber, the empty goblet dangling from his long fingers. But it was not so.

"You are now a credit to Atlan," Hermes declared, surveying through

one half-closed eye the trim figure in linen trunks, loose shirt and sandals which confronted him. "Pardon my rudeness again. I've been working day and night on this comet story until I'm asleep on my feet. Besides, I'm half-shot on your nectar." He pulled himself three vertebrae higher in the chair.

Teraf ordered more wine while, with the ease of a star newsman, Hermes led the conversation into devious channels: What were the prince's impressions of Mars after ten years there? Was he returning to Hellas at once? What did he hope to accomplish in that godforsaken place with his civil engineering? What did he think of the comet? Was he planning to marry? And finally, what were his impressions of Earth after such a long absence?

To the latter question Teraf replied that he could make no answer other than to comment upon the increased number of barbarians on the streets of Atlan.

"That's just the point," exclaimed Hermes, suddenly vibrating with excitement. "That's my lead; that's just what I wanted you to say. Look! Atlan used to be a Martian city; old Poseidon laid it out after he conquered Atlantis, in a manner which made it impregnable. Five moats encircling the town...fortresses...all that. He knew a thing or two about colonization, that boy. Then he had to go and get himself killed when a mere infant...125 years old, wasn't he? And they went and picked Zeus to succeed him.

"**N**OW ZEUS is all right," the chronicler hastened to add, "but he trusts everybody. He has turned the army into an engineering corps, planted colonies all over the map and let the barbarians pour in here from every direction. We Martians are becoming as scarce as saber-tooth tigers.

"Great Land of Nod!" Hermes was sitting bolt upright now. "I've been traveling around this town getting the reaction on the comet. The place is a regular hotbed of rebellion; the Gauls and Britons, who were brought here to work in the factories, are aching for loot. You should see their hungry eyes when they pass a shop...or a pretty girl."

Hermes poured himself another glass of nectar and continued his monologue in a slightly-thickening voice. "You can't transform a savage into a civilized human being in a century, prince," he wagged his burnished head gravely. "You've got to hammer the tar out of him until he becomes afraid to turn pirate every time your back is to him. The Pitar is too easy; he thinks too much of Martian's burthen, and not enough of the Martian's scalp."

"Wait a minute," Teraf broke in; "are you arguing that we enslave these people?"

"Don't hand me that stuff; every colonial people is enslaved. What do you think we have colonies on Earth for? They pay off in good hard cash. With all our fine words, the barbarians know they're being taken for a sleighride and they don't like it. They live better than they ever did before, but we clean up. See?"

"Well..." This viewpoint was new to Teraf.

"Athena and General Ares are the only two people here—except me, maybe—who have the right idea," Hermes continued belligerently. "They want to pull in the outposts until we have consolidated our position in Atlantis itself, and bring reinforcements from home—even if we have to kidnap them. But would Zeus give up a single colony? He would like..." Hermes choked, glanced at his timepiece and jumped to his feet, apparently cold sober.

"Great Land of Nod," he cried. "I've only got an hour to catch the last edition. See you later, Prin..."

Prince." The journalist dashed for the door, then turned back to add sheepishly, "That nectar must have been potent; I have no business talking like this about the powers that be... especially to one of them. Consider my extreme depravity and forget about it, will you? But keep your eyes and ears open tonight."

And with that repetition of the Pitar's advice he was gone.



Where today roll the blue waters of the Mediterranean there must once have been great areas of land, and land with a very agreeable climate. This was probably the case during the last Glacial Age and we do not know how near it was to our times when the change occurred that brought back the ocean waters into the Mediterranean. ...The people of the Mediterranean race may have gone far toward the beginnings of settlement and civilization in that great lost Mediterranean valley.

H.G. Wells, Outline of History.

TERAF THREW himself on a pile of cushions when the reporter had departed, deciding to catch a few hours sleep before the conclave, which he remembered, was an all-night affair. For a time he mulled over the things which Zeus and Hermes had told him but at last he sank into a slumber filled with rebellious comets and pigtailed barbarians who tried to gore him with the ox-horns on their helmets. He was awakened by the valet, who brought him the blue silk ceremonial robe which rulers of Atlantis wore on this momentous night.

The prince had an odd feeling of unreality as he entered the pillared reception hall, still adjusting the folds of his clumsy garment. The setting

sun was casting long shadows through the western porticos of the chamber, but, through the opposite windows poured the ghastly light of the comet. The two sets of shadows wrestled across the marble floors. This unpleasant sight must have been noticed by others for, at that moment, the palace lights were switched on; their glow vanquished the shadows and brought back the world of every day.

Already the reception was under way. It resembled nothing else in the universe... except perhaps another reception planned by Pitaress Hera of Atlan.

The rulers of Atlantis—that is, members of the colonial court and the ten kings of the Mediterranean provinces and their entourages—were there, all clothed in blue. Guests in the openwork metal trappings of Mars, the short tunics of the Hellenes and Etruscans, the rough woollens of the Celts, and the violently-clashing dyed linens of the Egyptians were there, also. These latter had come to offer suggestions, present claims or make complaints at the conclave; many appeared ill-at-ease in the splendor of the marble hall.

Remembering the advice of Hermes, Teraf observed numerous barbarians casting covetous glances at the tapestries, the golden goblets and the jewels which adorned the robes of the women present. After his years on

grounds was there comparative peace—even here the comet-shine seemed an ever-present menace.

Dr. Vanya finally located the prince and dragged him back to the hall where Zeus and Hera, seated upon twin golden thrones, now welcomed the multitude.

The Pitar's face was twisted with pain but he was obviously trying to play up to his wife, a short, black-haired woman who once had been considered the greatest beauty of the countryside; now, under the influence of good living and power, she had waxed heavy about the hips and mouth.

Holding the zig-zag sceptre stiffly upright, his handsome face smiling down at his guests, the Pitar seemed a personification of power and kingliness. Occasionally he forgot his aching foot when his eyes happened to light upon the beauty of some barbarian girl.

Once again, Teraf made the acquaintance of all that splendid hierarchy; finally Hera beamed upon him as he knelt before the thrones and patted his hand in a motherly fashion when he stood up after the customary pledge of allegiance.

Athena, the Pitar's elder daughter, then slipped her arm through his and led him along the mazes of the palace while they talked of old times. Athena was a tall, finely-chiseled woman, whose creamy red skin was set off startlingly by the premature whiteness of her hair. Teraf knew her well. As secretary of colonies, she had always paid special attention to Hellas, and had done more to civilize his native land by her gentle persuasion than all the schoolteachers and soldiers provided by the Pitar.

"I want to have a serious talk with you, prince," she had said as soon as she met him. But thereafter their conversation remained confined to reminiscences. Athena appeared ill-at-ease and hesitant, as though she could not



the empty deserts of Mars, the prince felt out of place in the crowded, noisy room. Outside it was not much better, however. Food and drink were being lavished in the many dining rooms; the palace groves were melodious with orchestras and solitary musicians. Only in the outer reaches of the

bring herself to broach the subject nearest her heart.

DURING their walk they met General Ares, a frustrated, quiet man whose bleached eyes held a devil. Ares had little use for Alphas and merely barked a greeting at Teraf before hurrying over to Vulcan, the crippled engineer in charge of the power-broadcasting Tower of Bab El. The two were joined by Heracles, the hulking builder of the great dam which held the rising waters of the Atlantic out of the low-lying Mediterranean basin. They moved toward a portico and stood gesturing and pointing upward at the comet.

"Our long-tailed visitor seems to have the old boys all stirred up," Teraf commented idly.

"That's what I've been wanting to talk to you about," began Athena. "I believe I can trust you..."

She was interrupted by a soft, throaty laugh. It came from Aphrodite, youngest daughter of the Pitar, who hurried up, jewelled hands outstretched to the prince. "Oh Teraf," she exclaimed, prettily out of breath, "father gave me a message to deliver to you alone. You'll excuse us, Sis." She smiled rather condescendingly at Athena. "I'll return him in a few minutes."

With characteristic playful arrogance she carried him off to a quiet bower. Aphrodite, Teraf had to admit as he looked down at her bronzed oval face, was one of the most beautiful women he had ever seen on Earth or Mars. She was small but exquisitely-formed and she made the best of her charms by wearing a short blue robe which clasped with a pearl brooch on one shoulder, leaving a rounded breast bare and but slightly concealing the long line of her thighs.

It was of Aphrodite that the poets sang that she had been born of the sea foam. Yet, despite her allure, Teraf had the discourteous thought that, through years of keeping up her rep-

utation as the court's queen of love, she was becoming a bit too voluptuous to merit that characterization.

"There is no message," she laughed when they were alone. "I just wanted to talk with you and I can't bear Athena any more; she thinks too much."

"Tell me about yourself since last I saw you," she rattled on as she drew him down on a bench decorated with carvings of the gods of ancient Atlan. "For years I've been dying to go home, but father won't hear of it. He says there's too much work to be done here."

"But I hate it!" Suddenly her green eyes gleamed at him like those of a cat. "I dream of the courts of Minos and the other fair cities of Mars which I have never seen. Instead, I have to put up with these filthy earthlings and the heat and the work... work...work. No one has time to play...with me." The last words were a whisper and an invitation. Almost with astonishment he found that he was holding her in his arms and kissing away her tears.

At last he took her soft little hand and told of Mars as she liked to believe it was. He failed to mention the icy nights; the thin, piercing air which cut like a razor into the lungs of an Alpha; the horror of ever-encroaching deserts and the struggle for existence which made life on earth a paradise by comparison.

She listened, almost purring with enjoyment. But, although his heart fluttered under the gaze of those great, glowing eyes, Teraf could not resist an inward grin at the memory of how he had painted the same beautiful picture of Earth for a bored Martian girl, six weeks ago.

THEIR TETE-A-TETE was interrupted by a fanfare of trumpets from the hall; they hurried inside just as the crowd parted to admit a tall, black-haired man in the travelling tunic of a Hellene.

Leaving Aphrodite with a word of apology, Teraf hurried forward to greet his elder brother, King Refo. The latter saw him coming and halted in the center of the hall. They gripped hands. "Sorry I couldn't meet you when you arrived," said Refo, the warmth of his dark eyes belying his almost expressionless face, "but great things are brewing in Athens. I'll talk of that later; but now I suppose I must pay my respects to His Ineffable Magnificence. Let's get it over with."

Arm in arm the brothers—so oddly different in type—approached the Pitar's throne. Refo was tall and gave the effect of blackness, like a thunderstorm in the distance; his aquiline face permitted no advances. His Martian father had given nothing to his son except a brilliant mind.

On the other hand, Teraf was pure Martian to all outward appearance... burnished hair, copper skin, extreme height, almost abnormally-wide shoulders and the carriage of a wire-walker. But his happy-go-lucky nature was a gift from the gay little Achaean shepherdess who had bewitched his father when the latter was sent by Poseidon to colonize Hellas.

Zeus greeted the newcomer without the warmth which Teraf had expected; both men merely bowed with fingertips to forehead and exchanged a few formal phrases. Teraf felt a chill over the room and behind his back he knew the guests were whispering.

The tension was broken by another fanfare announcing the arrival of Plu Toh Ra, Pharaoh of the Egyptian province, with his daughter and heir, Pan Doh Ra.

Teraf drew in his breath sharply at the appearance of this couple. Plu Toh Ra was a veritable giant, all of seven feet tall and proportionately broad. His hawk-like face and hypnotic eyes gave an impression of ruthless strength. His features were fine, though the effect was somewhat spoiled by the fact that the bones of his face

were clearly visible beneath the swarthy skin. His slanted eyes, black as midnight, wandered slowly over the crowd and Teraf noticed that there were few who could meet that glance.

The prince remembered strange tales of the power which the Pharaoh held over his millions of subjects. No Martian nor Aliha he; the Egyptian boasted that his ancestry traced back to Ra, the sun god himself, and that he paid fealty to the Martians only so long as he benefited thereby. Educated on Mars after his father had bowed to the inevitable during the first years of the Martian conquest, the Pharaoh had returned unchanged to build up an empire within an empire. It was even whispered that he dreamed of some day being the first barbarian Pitar of Atlantis.

Tearing his eyes away from that dominant figure in its sweeping, violently-colored linen robes, Teraf turned them on the daughter. The difference between the two was startling; the Helene vaguely recalled that Plu Toh Ra had married a Martian girl, but he was not prepared for what he saw. Pan Doh Ra, aptly named "A gift from all the gods" was slim and lithe, like a young panther, and her garment was, in fact, fashioned out of a panther's skin. Her eyes were twin pools of darkness which contrasted strangely with her hair which was a sort of golden-black. Yet this intensity of coloring did not make her resemble in the slightest her cloud-burst of a father.

She was, Teraf decided, merely a playful panther kitten, bewildered by being led through some thunderous procession. She should have been sunning herself by some cool stream. What would she become under the domination of such a father? He shivered.

Teraf and his brother still were standing before the dias when the Egyptians were escorted forward. The former thought he saw a quick glance

of understanding pass between the two older men.

"Greetings, Pitar," said the Egyptian. "You seem worn by the cares of your high office tonight."

"Greetings, Pharaoh," was the equally sardonic reply. "Take care, or your own high office may become a bit wearing also."

The king of Hellas then introduced Plu Toh Ra to his brother and concluded the ceremony by leading the girl to the foot of the twin thrones. "This, oh Pitar, is my betrothed, the Princess of Sais," he said proudly while Pan Doh Ra blushed.

"Not bad. Not bad," purred Zeus and then tried not to jump as Hera pinched him. "We give you our Pitaric blessing."

As Refo led the girl away while the crowd cheered, Pan Doh Ra smiled up at Teraf. Rather, it seemed, she grimaced pitifully as though her heart were not gay. *Poor panther kitten*, he found himself thinking, then wondered why such a silly idea should cross his mind.



...the people were gathered together every fifth and every sixth year alternately, thus giving equal honour to the odd and the even number. And when they were gathered together they consulted about public affairs and enquired if any one had transgressed in anything, and passed judgment on him accordingly, and...when darkness came on and the fire about the sacrifice was cool, all of them put on most beautiful azure robes, and, sitting on the ground, at night, near the embers of the sacrifices over which they had sworn, and extinguishing all the fire about the temple, they received and gave judgment...

Plato's Critias.

THE ARRIVAL of the Egyptians brought the reception to an end and marked the beginning of ceremonies incident to the conclave proper. Amid a blare of music, Zeus limped from his throne, entered a sedan chair and took his place at the head of a procession formed by members of his court, the ten kings and their resplendant retinues. The little column was followed by the sacred white bull, which was to be sacrificed on the altars of the ancient Titan deities, Gaea and Uranus, in the sacred grove of the Gaic Oracle.

Tradition had it that this was the thousand-and-second such procession to the shrine. According to old stories Gaea and Uranus were founders of the race of Titans which had ruled Atlantis before the coming of the Martians. Even now, original inhabitants of the Mediterranean basin were known as Titans and still boasted of their high ancestry.

The invaders from the red planet, realizing the grip of the old sun and earth worship, had not endeavored to stamp it out; rather they had made use of its festivals and customs for their own purposes. Thus, although the old rituals were retained, the conclave—which had once been a purely religious gathering of the ten independent kings of Atlantis—now had become a conference of governors, where problems of trade, education, etc., were discussed.

The oracle of Gaea, a cleft in the floor of a deep cave through which issued gas that, in the old time, was supposed to make the priestesses see visions and issue cryptic advice, had been closed by order of the Martians, who felt it to be a menace to their regime. A high iron fence had been built around the cave, and no one was allowed to enter, even during the conclave.

To the rhythm of devotional music played by both old-fashioned stringed instruments and hidden loudspeakers, the procession moved slowly out of the

hall and up the mountain. Ignoring the cable-cars which connected the palace with Bab El, the participants walked in pairs, flanked by torchbearers. The two lines of dancing lights usually could be seen in all parts of the city, and were the signal for public prayers. On this occasion, however, the effect was spoiled by the light of the comet, which cast its sickly glow over the landscape and made the torchlight impotent.



Teraf walked beside his brother, who had slipped a blue robe over his travel-stained clothing; just behind them were the Egyptians. Although the other kings were surrounded by many advisers, the two Hellenes were unattended, as were the Pharaoh and his daughter. This was explained by the fact that the others had arrived in Atlan many days before to take advantage of the city's hospitality.

The King of Hellas was in a bad humor. At first he walked in silence. Then, as the way became steeper and the procession lengthened, he burst forth angrily; "It's a shame; this is but a shell of our old religion. The red men are mocking us. In the old days the free kings of Atlantis came here to worship their Gods; now we puppets come to discuss tin imports from Britain."

"And in the old days those hungry, skin-clad kings parted to start new wars against each other," Teraf could not help interposing.

REFO SNAPPED, "Have your years away from home made a weakling of you? Of course those old kings made war. War is the highest form of human activity; it tempers the will of the people. They lived hard and died

gloriously; that was the Golden Age. Now even their oracle is defiled."

"Aye," boomed the mellow voice of the Egyptian from behind them. "Refo is right. Today we build factories, till the soil, fly through the air and... get fat. But some day the Celts, who despise us, will sweep over this land like a swarm of locusts! Hmmm!" His cadaverous face split in a smile. "Not a bad phrase, that: 'Like a swarm of locusts'."

"But the Martians have a superior culture," Teraf protested. "They have advanced Terra a thousand years since they came and neither Celts nor Titans can stand against their weapons."

"There speaks the Alpha," sneered the Egyptian. "A true Titan would be planning ways to re-establish his kingdom. Why, one bold stroke could wreck the Tower of Bab El, cripple all their motive power and..."

He felt the amazed eyes of the younger Hellenes upon him and stopped short.

"We may count on you, Teraf, if trouble comes?" Refo burst out anxiously when the silence had become strained. "You'll support any struggle for liberty, won't you?"

"Say, what is this?" snapped the prince. "You may count on me to back Zeus to the limit. Brother or no brother, I advise you to say or do nothing further; as for you, Egyptian crawl back into your mummy-case."

Plu Toh Ra's yellow teeth showed in a bleak smile for an instant. Then he dropped back beside his daughter and, without another word they resumed the long climb. A quarter of an hour later they arrived at the valley of the oracle, a circular glade high up on Crooked Mountain and open to the view of the city beneath.

Great fires were lighted on the Altars of Heaven and Earth. The bull was slaughtered with many incantations by several priests in long white robes. (Teraf remembered having seen several of those same priests working

as gardeners about the palace in a more prosaic garb). Then the carcass of the animal was quartered and hung above the fires to roast. Until the barbecue would be finished, Zeus, ten members of his own court and the ten kings sat on the ground in a semi-circle and talked about matters of state.

Since Refo occupied the seat allotted to Hellas, Teraf wandered into the forest, trying to consolidate the many things he had learned since his arrival. It began to look to him as if the long rest he had earned during his years of furious study on Mars would not be forthcoming.

All about him, minor officials of the governing classes were building bonfires near which they would dice or play cards until the rising sun put an end to the conclave and the carcass of the bull would be cut down and distributed for a morning feast before the return to Olympus Palace.

Heedless of where he was going, Teraf stumbled on. Hermes' warning; the coldness between his brother and the Pitar; the strange glance of understanding between Refo and the Egyptian, and lastly, the cryptic words while they were climbing the mountain all seemed to merit careful thought.

At one turning he came across the fence which barred entrance to the cave of the oracle. He skirted its sinister bars and turned at last to rejoin one of the groups seated about the friendly little fires. But he had taken only a few steps when he leaped backward, heart pounding and hands scrabbling at the entangling rope in search of sword hilt or heat pistol.

Before him, limned in the shadows, was crouching a nightmare—a five-foot-long, horse-like head armed with a double row of teeth, and surmounted by a tall horn or crest was darting at him on its thin, leathery neck. The thing had the body and wings of a bat, a thousand times enlarged.

Pterodactyl! flashed through the prince's mind as he managed to get his dress-sword free. *I'm done for!*

THE CREATURE made no move toward Teraf, though it rustled folded, parchment-like wing in an ecstasy of fury and hissed like escaping steam. The prince was tempted to run, but his curiosity finally got the better of him; he approached carefully, to discover that the flying reptile was fettered with chains which hobbled its feet and passed over its wings.

He had completely circled the pterodactyl—first of the vanishing breed that he had ever seen alive—when a soft voice spoke at his elbow:

"Don't be annoying Sonny. He never could abide strangers."

Teraf whirled, sword still in hand, to find Pan Doh Ra smiling at him out of the shadows.

"Is...is that delirium tremen yours?" he gasped.

"Certainly." The girl came forward and caressed the gibbering creature's head as though it had been that of a favorite horse. "The Pharaoh won't ride in an airplane unless it's absolutely necessary; says they're effete. He prefers to fly on the back of one of his own birds."

"You mean you have more of these outlandish creatures."

"Oh my, yes; we have a whole flock of them at Sais. Of course, Sonny is the fastest and strongest of the lot. Want to pet him? He's quite calm now, aren't you Sonny?"

Teraf felt no call to caress the brute, yet he didn't want to show his aversion. Sheathing the silly sword, he stepped forward and ran his fingers over Sonny's bony head and around its mouse-like ears. The pterodactyl now seemed assured of the friendliness of its disturber and purred like a cat.

"I'm the only one who can manage him," the girl said proudly. "The Pharaoh was in a hurry to get here, so he took Sonny and had to bring me along to take care of him."

"But why didn't you land at the palace dock, instead of 'way up here?"

She shrugged her slim shoulders and silently continued patting the reptile.

"They'll not be wanting us at the 'conclave until dawn," Teraf made another try. "Let's build a fire here and talk."

"I shouldn't; the Pharaoh wouldn't like it." But she made no further complaint when he struck a light.

For a while they stared at each other in awkward silence until Teraf half-regretted his impulse to become acquainted with this wild creature. Unconsciously, she had dropped into the conventionalized sitting posture of the Egyptians, legs crossed and hands on knees... *like a living sphinx*, he thought.

OUT OF THE corner of his eye,

Teraf watched the graceful, repressed little figure crouched beside the blaze in her outlandish short skirt and breast-cloth of panther-hide. She did not seem anxious to talk... seemed almost to have forgotten him and to be seated on a lotus leaf in contemplation. Pretty knees she had!

"I must congratulate you on your betrothal to my brother," he said formally when he became conscious that thoughts were leading him astray. "He's splendid."

She crossed her arms, placing one hand on each shoulder. (*Another damned conventionalized attitude, the prince fumed. Nice hands, though, with tapering fingers.*)

"...a splendid person," he repeated in panic.

"Is he?" she asked simply. "It was the Pharaoh's wish." (This came as an afterthought.)

"Then you don't care for Refo?" Teraf bristled slightly.

"Oh, he's all right...but he can't laugh." The answer was almost a sigh. Charming contralto voice she had.

"I didn't think you...your countrymen had much use for laughter."

"They haven't; that's why I hate them so." There was a light in her eyes which was not a reflection from the fire. "But I learned to laugh in Minos...and I can't quite forget."

"You were educated on Mars!" Somehow the idea that this sphinx-faced beauty had not lived all her life among the pillars and pyramids of Sais came as a shock. But her statement awakened a bond of sympathy between them and their conversation lost its strained character. They had mutual friends on the home planet. Both remembered the stark beauty of the deserts and the mad, gay battle for existence.

For an hour they chatted, while Pan Doh Ra lost her conventionalized manners and became just a laughing, carefree girl. Finally he told her of the oracle's cave and she expressed a burning desire to explore it. They succeeded in finding the gate at last, but it was locked, and rusted fast as well.

Without a word Pan Doh Ra ran back to Sonny, released the hobbles on his feet and brought him back on leash like a dog. "Open it," she commanded, shaking the gate vigorously. The beast cocked its horned head thoughtfully, then hooked its skinny claws into the ironwork and surged back with a great flapping of wings. The lock snapped and they were inside.

"Good boy," crooned the princess, readjusting the hobbles as her pet nibbled a lump of sugar. "Let's go, and Isis take the hindmost, as the Pharaoh would say."

They found a pile of half-rotted torches inside the cave-mouth and, lighting two of them, paced down the sandy floor between rows of stalagmites and stalactytes which rose like curtains of silver and jewels on either side of the passage.

"I've heard the gas is dangerous," Teraf whispered, awed despite himself as the cavern opened out like a cathedral before them.

"I stopped breathing long ago," his companion giggled in an attempt at nonchalance. "I'm scared stiff but I wouldn't admit it."

They tiptoed through the whispering silence until a patch of light caught

their attention. It was a hole in the cliff wall through which the comet-shine streamed. In the floor of the cave was a corresponding fissure and from it issued a grey thread of gas.

"Let's just sniff it," she suggested as they approached through a double circle of rough hewn altars. "Maybe we'll see Gaea and Uranus themselves."

"Not on your life."

Teraf gripped her arm. But his precaution was useless; at that moment the volume of gas increased. It gushed from the chasm and filled the whole cave with vapors which eddied along the low ceiling like ghosts.



The Hellene started to drag the girl toward the entrance as a sweetish-acrid odor bit into his nostrils. But a lassitude seized him; his knees sagged. He found himself lying on the sandy floor with Pan Dob Ra beside him.

FOR A MOMENT, Teraf was badly frightened; then a sense of well-being drove out the fear. At the same time the cave seemed to expand until it took in the universe. The beat of his heart assumed a slower and slower tempo until each throb was like the measured thud of a sledgehammer.

"How do you feel?" he asked the princess, after he realized that it would take them at least a thousand years to walk to the entrance of the cave.

"Lovely," she purred, stretching voluptuously. "Wanna stay here forever." To his hyper-sensitized mind the words came minutes apart.

For a time they were silent, then. In the plane to which the gaseous drug had lifted them, centuries passed

and generations were born and died. Then, in a calm, detached voice, Pan Dob Ra began talking as though at the prompting of an invisible psychiatrist.

For a time she spoke of her repressed childhood among the priest-ridden people of the Nile; of religious processions and rituals which made up most of the life at court; of sweaty caravans returning across the deserts from far places; of the aching sunlight and the choking duststorms.

As she talked, pictures swam before Teraf's eyes, as though he actually were witnessing the scenes she described. The grey billows of gas took form and color so that he watched the passing of the snorting camels and helped beak-nosed, priests perform rites among their monoliths.

Then the princess told of her few happy years on Mars where, through pressure brought on the Pbaraob by Zeus, she had been sent to be educated. And again, across the back of the cave, colors ebbed and flowed, revealing the fairy skylines of Martian cities, gay school scenes, jaunts into red wastes which had been waterless for a million years; friends made, and the gradual unfolding of a girl's vivid personality.

Next came the return to Sais; to the barbarous, oppressive yellow and black palace. Pan Doh Ra's hand clutched that of her companion tightly as she related how Plu Tob Ra, now completely under the domination of the Seraphist priesthood, had crushed her back into the old routine.

She was allowed but one recreation—and that only because she was a master at it. She trained the serpent-birds, last of their breed, which the Egyptians had half-domesticated ages before and kept in a den under the palace, ready for use as terrible engines of destruction.

Pan Doh Ra had a strange power over those nightmarish survivals; they would follow her like dogs, though with other persons—even those who occasionally rode on their backs—

they were ferocious and intractable.

"I tamed Sonny myself," she boasted. "He's the largest and swiftest of the brood. But he had a devil; still has. Once he killed three of his keepers."

SHE DROOPED and was silent for a long while, her wide eyes fixed on the column of gas bubbling from the floor. Teraf vaguely sensed her thoughts...her loneliness and misery floated like antic shapes across the mist. "How did you meet my brother," he ventured at last.

"Oh, the Pharaoh gave me to him as the price of Hellas' allegiance." Her voice had gone flat. "I know now that we're going to die here, so I might as well tell you everything."

"Gave you? Allegiance?"

"Of course. But Refo loves me as much as such a man can love a woman, I suppose. Last year he came to Sais on a visit of state and saw me; he begged the Pharaoh for my hand. Plu Toh Ra saw an opportunity to gain a powerful convert to his crusade. I was the price. He didn't have to do much persuading; Refo had always longed to bring back what he calls the Golden Age."

"Then it's war?" whispered Teraf. "But that's ridiculous; in six months half a million soldiers could be sent from Minos to Atlan."

"But in six weeks Atlan may be but a memory if...my father loves to go around, muttering 'thy days are numbered!'" The girl threw out one slim arm to steady herself, then sank slowly to the floor.

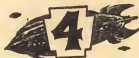
With a desperate effort Teraf rallied his will power. What had they been doing, sitting here like two opium eaters? He managed to stagger to his feet. But to lift the girl was beyond his waning strength; he fell across her unconscious body, then, gripping her shoulders, tried to drag her away from the fissure.

He made some progress, but, as he crept past the leering Titan altars, his lungs drawing in great draughts

of the gas, the cave expanded until it reached the very stars, and the floor stretched endlessly before him. Finally he ceased his efforts.

Eons later he had a vision. A giant, its face covered with cloth, strode through the mists, taking one step every hundred years. Its voice boomed like the tolling of a bell, "Great... Land...of Nod. Thought there... was ... a ... story ... in ... that...broken...gate. Hup there! Come...with...papa!"

Teraf's senses swayed into darkness.



Which shaketh the earth out of her place and the pillars thereof tremble.

Job, 8-6

TERAF AWOKE in his room to meet the questioning eyes of Dr. Vanya. "What...?" How...?" he stammered, sitting up quickly and lying down just as suddenly.

With a look that spoke volumes, Vanya handed him a copy of the *Evening Planet*. Even stories of the comet's approach and of the conclave had been subordinated to a scarehead which read:

Planet Chronicler
Saves Prince & Princess.
Curse of Gaelic Oracle
Falls on Daring Pair.

Teraf read on until he learned that Pan Doh Ra had completely recovered from the effects of the gas, but that his own case was "grave", before he tossed the sheet away.

Disregarding Vanya's pleas, he rose and dressed, feeling lightheaded still, but otherwise master of himself. There was too much to be done for him to remain in bed; the prince could not doubt the meaning of Pan Doh Ra's last words. He thought of the Hellenes, always spoiling for a fight; they worshipped Refo and

would follow him to destruction.

Then, there was the possibility of a surprise attack by the Egyptians, with reinforcements for Atlan months away across 90,000,000 miles of space. He must tell Zeus, of course, but first he must find his brother and endeavor to dissuade him. And Pan Doh Ra? What of her if Plu Toh Ra learned that she had disclosed the plot?

He must have been unconscious many hours for it was night again—as much night as it could be with the comet blazing overhead—when Teraf stepped out into the palace gardens. For an hour he prowled the park, then turned back to the palace, his mind made up. He would try to make Refo see his error and, if that failed, denounce him before the court.

As he reached this point in his reasoning he swung round a turn in the path and came upon a black-robed figure, its arms uplifted, its face turned toward the comet.

"Oh, Uranus, God of the Skies, smite this proud nation that dares mock your rituals," words trumbled from back-drawn lips. "Return us to the Golden Age, when the din of machinery did not defile your sacred groves; when our youths were not debauched, but followed in the footsteps of their fathers. Hurl your curse..."

"What mumbo-jumbo is this, Refo?" Teraf tried to make his tone casual.

"You!" gasped the king. "I thought you were dying...that you would at least have the grace to die after bringing shame upon our house and that of Egypt. Get out of my sight, false Titan."

"Have you been sniffing the oracle, too?" The younger man was flabbergasted. "What on Mars do you mean?"

"I mean you have ruined the woman who was to have been my wife...that you..."

"Was to have been your wife?" Teraf's eyes narrowed.

"You heard me. The Pharaoh called me this morning, apologized for her

disgraceful conduct and broke the engagement. She's being taken back to Sais now to become a temple virgin, if her father can arrange the...ah... technical difficulty."

Teraf dropped his hand to his sword hilt, then gritted his teeth and made one more effort to talk to this madman. "If what you're implying actually took place," he choked, "would we have been found unconscious?"

"It would have been easy enough to hold your heads over the gas stream when you thought you were discovered." The king was beside himself with rage. "You're no brother of mine; fawn on your Martians till the gods' blight falls on them, but never dare set foot in Athens again on pain of death."

"But you'll go back there to plot treachery against our father's people." The prince realized now that further pleas were useless. "I know about the revolt you're planning and by all the gods of Earth and Mars, I won't let Hellas be ruined to please a beetle-worshipping Egyptian."

"If you know that, you must die at once." Refo whipped out his slender dress sword and lunged as he spoke. Half-expecting the attack, Teraf leaped backward, and jerked out his own blade.

THEY STAMPED back and forth across the wanly-lit sward, each striving for an opening at throat or heart. The elder brother was the more powerful, but he was accustomed to swinging the two-edged, Hellenic short-sword and had never had expert training with the nimble Martian rapier.

Step by step, Teraf forced Refo backward until he managed to hem him against the wall of an ornamental grotto, where further retreat was impossible. Back and forth the thin blades quivered, always in contact. Twice Teraf drew blood from his opponent's breast, heart-high but not deep. Once he slipped on the dewy grass and felt an electric stab of pain as Refo's weapon grazed his side.

But the king was becoming winded.

More and more wildly he parried the machine-like thrusts of his brother. His timing became inaccurate; his arms seemed weighted. The time had come for the finishing stroke. Teraf's anger had been partially dissipated by the struggle. He knew his brother would never submit to disgrace; should he kill him as an act of mercy?

As he pondered, the earth beneath them seemed to shiver, like a great beast awakening from sleep. The light changed subtly; shadows danced together about the grotto.

Refo, who had been facing the comet, dropped his guard and stared, the duel forgotten. Teraf turned and did likewise, while the ground heaved like the sea. Against a background of ghastly green sky, the comet was growing! For several moments, it gave the impression of rushing to engulf the earth. But, as they watched in wonder, it split—then burst like an exploding shell.

The shock of that gargantuan explosion reached them a few breaths later; the earthquake redoubled, hurling them about like straws. A wind of hurricane proportions came howling from all directions.

Teraf lay on the trampled grass, staring at the remnants of the comet which were fading like sparks up a chimney. Then a tree which surmounted the grotto came crashing down upon him.



A beautifully wooded park-like country surrounded the city. Scattered over a large area of this were the villa residences of the wealthier classes. To the West lay a range of mountains, from which the water supply of the city was drawn. Atlan itself was built on the slopes of a hill which rose from the plain about 5,000 feet. On the summit of this hill lay the emperor's palace and gardens, in the centre of

which welled up from the earth a never-ending stream of water, supplying first the palace and the fountains in the gardens, thence flowing in the four directions and falling in cascades into a canal or moat which encompassed the palace grounds and thus separated them from the city which lay below on every side. From this canal four channels led the water through four quarters of the city to cascades which in their turn supplied another encircling canal at a lower level. There were four such canals forming concentric circles, the outermost and lowest of which was still above the level of the plain. A fifth canal at this lowest level but on a rectangular plan, received the constantly flowing water.

The Story of Atlantis—W. Scott-Elliot

ONCE MORE Teraf opened his eyes to stare into those of Dr. Vanya. "Tut!" fumed the ancient. "Do you live at this place all the time? I warn you, it will upset you."

The prince pushed away those withered hands and sat up. He was swathed in bandages and one shoulder ached infernally. "What happened?" he demanded. Then: "Where's Refo?"

"They said something about the comet exploding as the result of the opposing gravitations of Earth and Mars. Don't know much about it myself; been too busy taking care of those injured by the earthquake to find out. Quite a few people killed. Tree fell on you. Dislocated one shoulder and caused a slight concussion. You'll have to stay in bed a few days."

"But my brother; what happened to him?"

"Sit down, young man! Calm yourself. Your brother is well. Carried you in here after the quake. Was bleeding from several contusions but wouldn't stay to have them dressed."

"Where did he go?"

"My dear boy, how should I know? Now that I think of it, he did tell me to say to you that he was sorry, though for what I don't know. Now try to get

a little rest, like a good fellow."

But Teraf pushed him aside and stumbled toward the door. He must reach the Pitar before it was too late; the attack would come at once, he felt, since Refo must realize that the plot was known. He ran down the hill toward the audience chamber while the doctor trailed behind, protesting querulously.

The palace was in disorder. Here and there, great cracks yawned in the halls, while chunks of marble and plaster fallen from the ceiling made going difficult. Workmen were clearing away the debris; officials dashed back and forth through the rubble.

The prince found Zeus calmly dictating directions to Apollo for rescue work in the city. He started up when the bandaged apparition entered, then waved away his gaping secretary and limped forward.

Teraf stammered out his story, half-expecting to be disbelieved, but there was no doubt on the Pitar's face. Hardly was the tale told, when Zeus, his lame foot forgotten, leaped to the television-screen which filled one corner of the room. There he began pushing buttons and issuing crisp orders as directors of the various military stations appeared for a moment on the ground glass panel.

In the midst of this commotion the screen flashed imperatively and the hunched figure of Vulcan, seated in his office atop the Crooked Mountain, wavered into focus, "Beg to report the city in flames in the fifth circle," he cried. "Looting has started in the warehouses."

The twisted face faded and was replaced by that of General Ares, whose pale grey eyes were blazing with something akin to joy. "The City's in revolt," he chortled. "Have ordered out the first and second cohorts. We're holding most of the bridges, but the barbarians have captured several of them. Orders?"

"Throw up the fire screens," answered the Pitar. "After they're going, drop soldiers by airship where the

police are hardest pressed. Are the barbarians well armed? Who's leading them?"

"Commander at Station Three reports Plu Toh Ra and Refo have been seen among the barbarians. Many of the latter are unarmed and there seems no concerted plan of attack. Evidently, this had been planned months in advance, but was forced prematurely. Titans are taking no part in the attack so far."

THE SCREEN went blank. Zeus, walking as quickly as though he had two good feet, led Teraf to the window through which only a day before they had looked at the comet. It commanded a superb view of the city, with its five canals lying like concentric silver rings among the soaring buildings.

Many fires now could be seen blazing throughout the town. Through them, little groups of Martians and Titans fled hither and thither, pursued by the barbarian hordes.

The second circle—that which enclosed the barracks—was, however, a bustle or organized activity. The relatively-few soldiers were under arms and standing in solid ranks beside airship hangars. Covers were being dragged from infra-heat reflectors, so the guns might be trained upon the principal avenues of approach to the citadel.

The greatest congestion was at the heads of the many canal bridges. At such points the attack seemed going forward in an organized manner and the loyal patrols were hardpressed.

Then, as they watched, the water of the four inner canals caught fire! At first it boiled, then burst into flames as though it had been gasoline. These flames mounted throwing clouds of inky smoke which hung low over the water. In their terrific heat many bridges melted and crumpled, dropping those who had been caught on them into the cauldrons beneath.

"There you have the horrors of war, prince," sighed the Pitar as he tugged

at his curly beard. "Good, silly, brave men dumped to their deaths like rats. General Ares' diabolic invention is saving Atlan. For years he's been spending a large part of the military appropriation on chemical bombs which he sunk at intervals in the bottoms of the canals, where they could be ignited by radiowaves from Bab El. Doesn't last long. Look!"

Already the circular sheets of flames were dying, and their smoke screens being swept away by the breeze. But what a different scene was presented as the air cleared; the barbarians were stampeding, trapped by the canals which still were full of boiling water.

Now from the second circle, cigar-shaped, wingless airships were scudding over the city to alight on rooftops or public squares. As they touched ground, their quotas of fifty soldiers would hurl themselves upon some still-belligerent group of barbarians. The police also were rallying, and the fire department was at work in the melee, extinguishing burning buildings.

"What's that?" Teraf gripped the arm of his chief and pointed—as, from the fourth, or business circle, a tiny ship flashed upward toward the setting sun.

"White and gold—the colors of Helias," gritted the Pitar as he leaped for the vision screen. "He must be stopped."

IT WAS too late. Before the orders could be issued, the fast flyer had disappeared toward the northeast. A moment later a mammoth bat-like thing soared up from the roof of one of the larger warehouses.

"It's a pterodactyl!" shouted Teraf. Through the Pitar's binoculars, he could clearly make out the chalk-white face of Pan Doh Ra and the sardonic, countenance of her father, as they were revealed by the reptile's flapping wings.

For a while it was touch and go. The pterodactyl was much slower than the ships which rose in pursuit, but it had

a head start. Sonny headed straight for the cloud of smoke, which had been whipped from the burning canals, and disappeared within it.

"They've escaped, too," sighed Zeus as he turned off the useless screen and limped wearily back to the window. "The smoke won't dissipate until nightfall. That means more bloodshed; more misery.

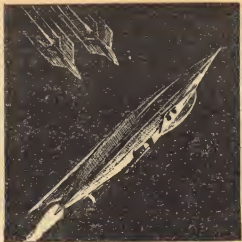
"I'm too easy, Teraf," he continued as he sank into his throne. "I've distrusted both Plu Toh Ra and Refo for months. Reports have filtered in... but I wouldn't believe them. What have they to gain? Liberty?"

He laughed bitterly. "The barbarians have more liberty under Martian rule than any of them could have dreamed of a century ago. We have brought them release from their bickering, ignorant kings. We have seen that they no longer starve in the midst of plenty. By Chronus, we've almost made them our equals. And yet, for a bit of loot, they would still follow their old leaders. I don't understand."

He unstopped a flagon of nectar and poured a bumper of the heady liquor for his guest and another for himself. "Call Apollo," he groaned. "I've got to have this damned foot massaged."

Outside, in the lurid glow of sunset, the city was being restored to order. Fires were dying down; lights flicked on. A few leaders of the barbarians, who had not been killed or arrested, were urging their followers into suicidal attempts to break the cordons thrown about them. But their guns were exhausted and their swords were pitifully useless against the ruddy sparkle of the weapons of the soldiers and police.

To all appearances Atlan was returning to normal. And yet Teraf, studying the city over the top of his untasted glass, knew somehow that it would never be the same again. He thought of old Plu Toh Ra muttering, "*Thy days are numbered,*" and shivered.



Forgive Us Our Debts

by Lester del Rey

A lesser culture can be murdered by the more advanced without war, without violence, without exploitation, without even the intent to harm . . .

FANE FELT the force of the *kral* fields slowing the ship before the sleep was out of his eyes, and the soft purring hiss of power that was only barely tapped, usually. It had been three generations since the fields had been used, except in the ritual tests.

"Clossse," the great integrating reactors hissed. "Closse."

In another day they would reach the planet they had selected, and the long Cruise might be over. Fifty generations, if the legends were right—eleven branchings—fifteen hundred of those mysteriously arbitrary divisions called years...and now they had found a world that might have been made for them.

Lissa still lay snoring faintly on the bunk, her red hair sprawled out over her pale shoulders, beautiful even in her sleep. Fane's eyes lingered a moment over the curves the thin sheet

revealed. Perhaps, when this was over, and they had landed, he might ally himself with Lissa. He'd thought about it before—though, as a rule, only when another girl shared his cabin.

He shook her awake, grinning at the anger that always swept over her features at waking. This time, though, the sounds of surging power brought her out of the depths more readily. She half-opened her eyes. "What day?"

"Wednesday," he answered.

Lissa hated Wednesdays, when gravity was set for half over normal, and the air pressure and humidity were raised. There had been no way of knowing what the world at Cruise-end might be like, and each day had been different.

But she made no comment now; instead, she reached for the *koje* and wafers he had heated and wriggled

rapidly into her kirtle and officer's halter. She giggled suddenly, and he realized he'd been standing with one arm in his tunic and the other hanging for the last few minutes. He pulled it on, just as the panel buzzed.

"Captain's meeting in fifteen minutes," the speaker announced. "Compulsory, not optional. Acknowledge."

Lissa pressed his button, and they went out into the hall, toward the nearest bank of teleports. The *Kraling* still had the mono-relay setup—one of the many disadvantages of a ship two branchings old and long outmoded—and they had to wait while other previous jumps were cleared. Then the light blinked, and they were in the Captain's observatory.

The star they were nearing was bright enough by now to need shields over it, and the tank had four planets showing around it—two huge ones, and two of habitable size. Even as they watched, another, smallest of all, came into existence, far to the side. Observers were checking, but locating planets was always a slow business.

They were nearing the second observed planet from the star, about a hundred million miles out. Fane set the tank for maximum magnification, and gasped faintly. There are clouds in the atmosphere, thick over much of the planet. Below, the markings showed what must be continents and seas. Fane had never seen a planet, but study of detailed reports about several hundred that the Cruise along this branch-line passed had made him generally familiar with them. This was unusually rich in evidence of air and water. He reached the key and dialed the tank for details.

Estimated pressure, fifteen pounds at the surface; gravity about normal; nitrogen and oxygen four to one, traces of carbon-dioxide; average temperature midway between equator and poles about right for comfort; estimated rotation around star one year; rotation on axis about twenty-four hours—generally an almost ideal

world. There was an extreme tilt of the axis from the plane of rotation about the sun—which might make for a highly variable climate, but not beyond tolerable limits. And certain phenomena indicated that there was vegetation based on chlorophyll already on the planet!

LISSA shuddered ecstatically. "Ours, Fane—all ours! After all the generations, *we* are chosen. Discoveries, novelty, thrills, excitement—a whole world to bend to our desires—space unlimited to spread out for our children!"

"And a base," he added, more soberly. He caught a glimpse of his chiseled features, lean, tall body, and dark complexion beside her flame and ivory in the tank's plastic. For a moment, he felt some of her desires race through him, but he shook them back. "A place where we can build again—rear cities and increase, study and perfect ourselves. No more being little creatures in tiny worlds of metal, unnatural to the universe."

She made a mouh at him, but the warning bell cut it off. He started for the teleport, but Lissa dragged him back. "Fane, before you go—are you with us?"

He looked at her in surprise. "With you?"

"Do you want Cruise-end here? Will you vote for it? Even if your father wants to go on, along with the other old men who think because they were born in space their grandchildren should be born the same? Fane, are you on our side?"

It hadn't entered his mind to doubt, though he had heard talk among his father's friends that giving up the ships for a planet was like leaving a small, comfortable bed for a big room full of needles. He looked at the globe in the tank again. "I'm with you!"

His father was already seated at the

head of the table where captains of the fifteen ships, their allies, or their companions with them, waited. Fane settled beside Lissa, conscious of the envious eyes on him. His father nodded, and picked up the ceremonial scrolls.

"It is customary," Commander Bran began, "when approaching a place where branching may be made—"

Lusato, of the *Volanyi* cut in quickly. "Branching? Are we to set down, build new ships for our surplus population, and then split off into two parties—to go off on the Cruise? No! By God and by Atom, we *stay* here. I've seen the world in the tank; it's Cruise-end!"

Bran turned to him, a faint smile on his face. "I was about to say that, in this case, the customary reading of our history seems unimportant, since you are all impatient to decide. Any objections?"

They stirred, and nodded quick agreement. Most of the history was half-legendary, anyway. A short-lived cult of fanatics had killed the custodians and destroyed most of the records after the second branching. They knew they had been sent from some world to find and colonize another solar system, and to report back—sent out in a ship so crude that it seemed impossible it had made the voyage at all—one that had taken eighty years to travel six-light-years. It had found no hospitable planet, and gone on, until finally the pressure of population and exhaustion of supplies had forced it down on a barren world. There, somehow, more ships had been built, and the expedition had split, each half going off independently, to cover more space. Since then, there had been ten other such branchings—and incalculable progress. Now the ships made better than three-quarters light speed, powered by engines that took energy directly from space, and reacting through the *kral* fields directly on space for their drive. They could take any matter—even the massive stuff

from a dark star—to build whatever they liked.

Bran smiled again. "Very well. We have a decision; the world below can, perhaps, be Cruise-end. Or any of these worlds can lead to another branching—since most of our young men feel cramped by the necessary restrictions on having children in our space. But I feel I should point out that we have already achieved all that we could have done, had we found a planet long ago—and more. We represent inconceivable progress, meaningless figures of population, and innumerable cultures, if we assume even half of the branching parties have survived. We are not subject to the whim of a planet, but make our own conditions. And the world to which we are to report—it is lost, hopelessly. Why behave like grown men looking for a womb into which to retreat?"

Lissa looked at Fane, and he felt himself rising to his feet. Bran nodded for him to speak.

"We want Cruise-end," he said slowly, trying to find his reasons. "We've done well here—nobody questions that. But men belong on planets, father—where a billion people may work together, and where real progress can be made. You tell us we've gone far—but how far must the original world have gone? Suppose they come looking for us—and find us a bunch of primitives, living in what they consider hovels? Will we be happy in space then? By now they may have the very planets on which they live moving throughout space. They may travel faster than light—we know it is possible! They—"

"You want new adventures, unlike the old?" his father asked.

"Very well," Fane said; "we want new adventures. Is that wrong?"

Lissa jumped up beside him. "Vote!"

The younger men picked it up. Bran shrugged, and nodded, counting the hands. It was nine to six to make

this Cruise-end. Bran noted it down on the scrolls, and rose. "That's all, captains—except that you can still change your minds. Look at your ships when you return, and imagine life on the planet. Then wonder if it may not already be inhabited, since it is so well adapted for life. Because—it is!"

He turned and went out. Lissa caught Fane's arm, and bent to his ear, to whisper, but he jerked back, making her wait, pouting, until the others had gone. "You needn't worry, Fane! I'm not trying to ally with you—not after what you called a speech. All I wanted to say was that it's already beginning! Just think, a primitive race to overcome. We'll live, Fane—really live! We'll be heroes, fighting, conquering..."

SOMETHING hit the ship, jerking it as if space had dropped out from under it. The air swooped past them, roaring down the corridor, until the slap of air-seals went on. From overhead, the scream of a siren sounded, and the speakers snapped on.

"Captains to stations! Ships are under attack! All officers at stations! Locators..."

Fane jerked past Lissa and hit the studs of the teleport savagely, to come out in the *Kraling's* observation-control room. He snapped orders, after a single glance at the tank, but saw that the screens had already dropped. The generators took up a heavier hum under the load.

Outside the ships, space seemed to swarm with tiny specks. The sister ships of the *Kraling* seemed monstrous hulks beside them, huge doughnuts with lumps instead of holes in their middles, lumbering along at a crawl as they continued to slow toward the planet below. The little specks darted here and there, leaving trails of fire behind them. They twisted and turned impossibly.

Fane focussed on one. It was obviously a one-man vessel, open except for a narrow frame. The pointed nose

with the power and control section led back across the swelling frame to a tail that belched added flame whenever the vessel turned—obviously a steering mechanism. He puzzled back in his memory for the drive being used, and finally came up with it—the distorter that buckled space slightly. It could serve as a shield as strong as metal walls, yet it was so instable that only a small vessel was possible. Even then, it kept breaking down and reforming, making the fiery trail of electrons around and behind it—built from the collapsing of space in the distorted field.

One came down against the *Kraling*, and the big ship lurched, while a gout of roaring flame danced off into space behind it, where its field had touched that of the ship.

Then Fane swore in sudden amazement. Inside it was a woman—as human as Lissa, though her face was set in a mask of concentration and hate as she tried to hold her field steady and bore back for another strike.

Men were running in answer to his orders, space-suited and heading for the outer guns along the rim of the *Kraling*. He saw the same maneuver going on at the *Spendat*, where fat old captain Monoi was probably letting Lissa run things. The other ships were all following suit, now.

Two of the little ships suddenly came into the field of the guns, and imploded. Where they had been, all metal ceased to be, and the unprotected figures of the male and female drivers of the little ships suddenly puffed up and died in open space.

Fane felt sick. He had heard the legends of battles with other races, but these present were human—or nearly so. And their cause was hopeless. They were gallant enough—they still came roaring in for the battle, though they could do no harm to the big ships now, and were sitting ducks—whatever ducks were—for the gunners. The fools! If they had no better than space distortion, the *Kraling*

alone could blast the atmosphere off their planet, or set the inner core into atomic explosions that would rip it to shreds!

Suddenly he countermanded his orders to the gunners and went running toward the port, pulling on his space-suit. "Give me a gig, invisible," he ordered over his helmet phone.

The small gig used for picking up specimens of rock—or with luck, for examining planets they might find—was waiting, just sinking into invisibility as he reached it. He tossed open the tiny port, and leaped to the controls. There were only two of the little ships left, and he had no time for caution. He ripped upward at full acceleration, jerked the gig toward the nearest, and opened the big cargo hatch. The little ship was swinging for a return at the *Kraling* as he matched course and surrounded it.

The cargo-hatch swung shut, and he adjusted his controls, damping out the space distortion as quickly as air could run into the hold. The girl driver let out a frightened screech, and fainted as she seemed to be exposed to empty space.

He went back to the hold, cutting off the power-consuming invisibility, and found her sprawling across the cushions of her tiny machine, but unharmed. So close, she looked even more human. The ghastly make-up on her face came off with a few quick dabs, revealing normal enough skin. He bent and jerked the brief costume off her, just as she came to.

The absence of clothes made no difference to her, but his presence was a shock second only to her expected death. She drew back, muttering strange words in a moaning monotone. Like her body, there was nothing inhuman about her voice or her reactions.

Then she was at him, clawing and scratching. He clipped her quickly on

the jaw, and carried her to the control room, where he set the gig back toward the *Kraling*. "Kill the space-warp drives and put in a small kral field, with invisibility," he told the men. "And take this to my cabin."

HE WENT at a full run to the control room, switching into the Commander's line. "Dad, there isn't anything non-human about my captive!"

Bran's voice was tired and weary. "I know—I had a tracer on you. This world must have been found by another branch and settled. It isn't our right to invade—we'll have to go on."

But there was a satisfaction to his final words, Fane noticed. He started to protest, when another voice came on, that of Lissa. "Captain Lissa—Monoï had a heart attack. Commander Bran, we voted! That still stands! If they've sunk this far, or never gotten beyond the space distorter, they don't rate a world. We protest."

Once a vote was made, it took unanimous assent to change it. Bran's sigh indicated his failing hopes. "Very well. What now, Fane?"

"I'm going to follow the other ship—call off any attack on him. I'm taking an invisibility suit, and I'll rifle their records, somehow—enough to find whether it is a colony, and what they're like. They may have other weapons—sometimes a culture produces a single device out of keeping with the pattern—and that can be something completely outside our defensive knowledge. Your permission?"

"Granted."

Fane was gone again at a run, while excitement stirred in him. Lissa had been too high-handed—but she was right. He hated the killing, and yet something stirred in him. With a whole world before them, and a generation of making it wholly theirs,

life would have zest that it could never have on the ship.

He spotted the retreating single tiny ship, and caught up with it easily, following it down. Others were patrolling below. They obviously had no test for invisibility.



Another ridiculous battle was going on when he returned, but he paid no attention to it.

He dropped onto the *Kraling*, throwing out a bundle, and began a report before he reached the control room, coupling in through his suit phone. "They have a dozen languages, father—but one of them is the same as the language of the old records! They pronounce it oddly, but on one island they seem to be trying to revive it—they call it English! I found some newspapers in it. I'm sending them over."

He cut off before the excited babble of the other ships could reach him. The fracas outside was dying down now, as the ships retreated before the power of the larger vessels. Fane took a look at the tank, nodded to his lieutenant, and went back to his cabin.

It seemed incredible; no culture could drop that far. He had found no clue as to the Branch that had settled this world, nor as to the time they had been there. But the population indicated it must have been many generations before.

Even to his unpracticed eye, there were people here who were mere property—owned by others, a few who lived in what must seem to them luxury. The papers confirmed it, reporting on the "slave" rebellion just put down in connection with this "invasion from space." There were indications that some sections had slaves and some did not, but he couldn't be sure. Most of the mess he had found in the records and the current papers meant nothing to him—except that

science was little more than witchcraft, and that human dignity seemed to be something talked about a great deal, with no understanding.

Any Branch that had so far lost their culture had no right to a planet!

"The captive is being washed and disinfected for possible disease," he was told, but he only half heard it. He muttered an order for her to be sent when it was finished and went into his cabin.

IT BECAME more incredible as he studied the duplicate records and papers he had kept for himself. Terms that were meaningless began to have meaning—and ugly ones. Money became a symbol for one man to own more than another, irrespective of right and contribution to humanity. Nation became a term that meant disunity and hatred. They fought savagely against this "invasion"—and no wonder! They'd been fighting for thirty years before among themselves, with only a prohibition against atomics and nucleonics—because those ruined the wealth and the wealthy.

One nation, he saw, was trying to get the practice of slavery banned—and to begin exploiting the planets they had discovered again. For a time, it looked like sanity—and probably was, for them. But it was a sanity which included mob hysteria, persecution of minorities—apparently smaller groups who disagreed or were somehow different—and incredibly inefficient controls. And they talked about a "Dark Age" a few centuries before!

He threw it aside in disgust, and went to look at the control room. When he came back, Lissa and the captive were in the cabin; Lissa was experimenting with a tiny nerve-stimulator that sent the girl jerking and jumping, screaming faintly.

He jerked it from Lissa's hands. "Bitch!"

She grinned easily. "All right, Fane. I won't destroy your little plaything; I'll even let you have others, when

we've captured these. But don't forget—I have my rights, too."

He looked at her slowly, and for the first time, he really saw her. She'd fit, down there; she'd fit beautifully. Here, her future was clear enough—she'd try to become Commander by every trick she could—and the tardy, reluctant Psychometrists would decide that she must be given a mind-quieting, and a job of no importance; they'd hold off until the last moment, but the welfare of the Branch came before everything else.

He picked her up by one arm and a leg and threw her out into the hallway, where she went off, chuckling at what she thought lay behind his action.

The captive stared at him doubtfully. "*Bitch!* You speak English!"

Her accent was barbarous, but he could understand it.

"Of course. You're from that island—"

"Slave there, yes. But I was going to be freed—I'm from Niway, and we don't have slaves. We can speak English, most of us—once it was our language, too."

It was the most progressive of the savage communities there, covering one whole continent. He nodded, and she glowered at him. "England was going to free all its slaves—until you came along—and we had to be used for war. England and Niway are making a treating. Now—"

She slumped down onto the floor and began crying. With a sudden impulse, he pulled her up beside him, and tried to comfort her. One person didn't matter out of the billions that would be eliminated when they took the planet, and such savages hardly merited any consideration. Yet she seemed as normal and human as he was—there was nothing savage about her. The culture she came from was atrocious, but it seemed that the people in it could be simply normal humans in a crazy world. Now she was afraid, sick, and miserable, willing to find comfort even from a captor.

On that, he thought grimly, she'd probably had experience.

HIS FATHER'S voice awoke him. The Commander had come there in person. Sandra, the girl, darted back to the corner of the room, her face turning scarlet for some reason, but the Commander barely noticed her.

"They aren't a branch," Bran said wearily. "The planet is Earth—the world we all came from. This is the mother that sent us out—we've circled and come home. We have a map of the system from before, and we've charted the planets. This—this is what happens to a race on a planet. Every five hundred years, they change direction—they recognize it as being due to something about sunspots, but they still obey the planetary law. They reached a peak, once, and sent us out, like an egg producing life. They might do it again, for all I know—but..."

Fane shook his head, and the knowledge was something that had been nagging his mind. "Then—they sent us out, father, expecting us to come back with new frontiers for them. I've seen some of the records, though I didn't understand. And we didn't come back—there are no new frontiers. This is the only planet suitable for men." He shook his head. "They gave us life—and now we're bringing them death."

The older man shrugged. "I tried to have the decision changed, but Lissa refuses. The others—except you—have agreed, and I might even change your mind. But it doesn't matter; the psychodynamicists have worked out enough on the basis of the records to predict that. If we retreat now, they'll still know we could have taken them with a power they can't even dream of. And they'll give up, sick at their own little progress, to go back down the road to full savagery, or to die. Whenever one of their little backwaters of the Dark Ages has been found by the more advanced, its culture has

died. This time, they will all be savages beside us."

He turned on his heel to leave. Then he stopped.

"In spite of the Covenant, Fane, thirteen of us are leaving—we have seen enough of life on a planet. We know that man was born there, but that he evolved beyond it once he reached space. Those who remain behind or drop back to the old level are wasted. The future of man belongs to the universe, not to mythical Course-endings. You can come—or you can stay with Lissa."

Fane stared about, trying to avoid his father's eyes. "I'll stay!"

He sat miserably, thinking it over, and this time Sandra tried to comfort him. But he wanted none of it. One ship alone could ruin a planet—and it seemed that none would be needed to ruin this mother world which had borne offspring she could not follow.

Sudden, savage attack began again, and this time the ships were larger—two-man affairs, with one man fighting to control the instable field while the other used the full power of its waste to strike again and again at the interstellar vessels. Fane swore, and went into the control-room.

Some of the ships from Earth were dropping from their own failures. But they had courage.

Thirteen of the ships above began moving slowly away—their fields were lowered to keep from upsetting the instable drives of the tiny ships from Earth, and there were no guns firing from them. Bran and the other twelve captains were keeping their word.

"Fane!" Lissa's voice came over the communicator. "Fane, my darling, I knew you'd stick. Give them hell!"

Her ship was spouting guns, and dropping off the little craft, like a hot plate destroying drops of water.

The tiny craft suddenly came

swooping down at him, as if detecting indecisiveness. He watched the harmless display of fire they set up from his screens impassively, and reluctantly ordered out a few gunners to chase them back. In the tank, one of the ten ships moving away hesitated. *It's fine to watch such a nice clean sport*, Fane thought bitterly.

Beside him, Sandra had crept up and was watching with a white face.

SLOWLY, his hand descended on the controls. The little ships darted down again, and a shout came up from the engine pit speaker. "Captain Fane, strengthen your screen—it's too low! We're being pitted a little here."

"Something wrong," he shouted back hoarsely. "Do you detect new radiation?"

"No!"

"Neither do I—but we're losing screen power! All hands—evacuate ship!"

He waited tensely, watching the counter on the teleport click off each use as the men obeyed. A thousand drills had made it automatic. And beside him, another counter indicated steadily dwindling power in the field around, though the generators still howled.

Somewhere below, power was running into huge batteries of accumulators, shunted across the control panel, and building up and up, far beyond overload. Fane grinned tensely. "Lissa!" he called. "I'm under some new attack. Can you cover me?"

She swung her ship toward him, stretching out her shield to the maximum, and drawing closer to make them meet. The tiny swarm of ships came at them savagely now. "Fane—what is it? Why—?"

The ships were almost touching now—and the accumulators were far beyond overload. Something like a small sun leaped suddenly from the *Kraling* toward her ship, and the shield vanished.

Fane heard her instinctive order to abandon ship, and knew that it was equipped with simultaneous teleports that would clear it in three seconds. Her call had been made without time to realize what had happened, but now she knew, and a burst of profanity poured from the speaker as she jerked her unmanned ship back under emergency manual and tried to re-establish control.

She might make it—if she could hold, she could call back the men. He had no illusions as to what would happen to him then—the overload's discharge had burned out every bit of power in the ship, and he was already falling toward Earth, with the little ships picking bits of him off every second.

Something flashed in the tank, and he saw the third ship lashing out with the maximum power of its beams. Lissa's ship seemed to fall apart under them.

IT WAS NO speaker that brought Lissa's words a second later. She stood behind him in the teleport booth, stepping slowly forward, with a hand-blaster held toward him. Her face was insane, and she strangled over the words. Obviously, she hadn't seen where the beams originated, and blamed him.

Sandra struck her down with a flying leap against her knees. Behind her, suddenly, the erect, proud form of Bran stood. He bent over, seized Lissa around the waist, and tossed her into the teleport, punching out a code rapidly.

"They'll take care of her in Psycho," he said quietly. "Good work, Sandra."

His fingers reached out for the teleport controls, and locked them, while Fane slowly realized that the third ship to drop back had been his father's. He grinned slowly, nodding, and the older man echoed his chuckle.

"We're not so much different, after all, son—we both thought of the

same trick. You've still got the gig, complete with invisibility? Good. Let's leave your ship, along with mine and Lissa's, for those tiny bits of courage out there to break into shreds before they reach atmosphere. I think they'll be convinced by now that we put on a big fight, but that we couldn't match them for power—and they'll go home feeling victorious until they begin wondering if we were only the advance guard. That should cure their little fights, and get them moving toward some real progress."

Fane led the way to the gig, while Sandra pointed out Nioway to him. Suddenly he started to turn back, but Bran shook his head. "I brought enough jewels and other trinkets," Fane. We can be rich enough for what we'll need to do—if this girl you've found can keep quiet."

Fane grinned, and translated. Sandra nodded emphatically, and the older man chuckled again.

They'd lost their rightful domain, lost it almost at the moment they'd realized what was truly theirs, what they had become—star-man. Once man conquered space, planets were no longer for him; he belonged out there among the stars, to expand and take all the multiple courses of progress. Well...the others would know, sooner or later; the big ships would probably stop for a Branching at this system's outer planet, but they were forever beyond Fane's reach. He was through with space.

"We'll pay our debts," he said. "We came home unknowingly, and our coming almost wrecked it."

Home. A young man on an old world. But his son, or grandson at the latest, would go forth, perhaps on another ship seeking frontiers that didn't exist. Earth could produce one other child, at least. And what he and the other immigrants knew must never be told; Earth's children must find this truth for themselves.

He pulled Sandra closer, and headed toward Nioway.



Readin' and Writhin'

A BOOK which has had much influence, which was controversial at the time of its first appearance and has remained so for centuries, is certainly not a volume to be dismissed lightly. The very fact that it has had weight, and that the arguments are still alive, makes the question of its "truth" irrelevant to the question of its interest.

The influence of Nostradamus' celebrated "Prophetic Centuries" cannot be measured directly, but we do know that, for some time, the famous quatrains were consulted by persons in high positions as guides to action, and that their decisions were often influenced by their "readings" of the prophecies.

The present volume appeared several years ago, but escaped my notice at the time. I'd intended to review it myself, but a reading of the first 100 pages made me realize that there were two important aspects of it, so far as making a recommendation was concerned, on which my ignorance made me incompetent. I could not know if it was, indeed, "complete"; I could not judge it, comparatively, as a translation. So, rather reluctantly, I turned the job over to L. Sprague de Camp, who has a considerable background in such matters.

THE COMPLETE PROPHECIES OF NOSTRADAMUS, translated, edited, and interpreted by Henry C. Roberts, New York: Nostradamus, Inc., 1949; vi + 850 pp., \$3.00. Fourth printing.

WHEN OVER twenty authors have tried to interpret the prophecies of Michel de Notre-dame, the sixteenth-century

French seer, why another? Well, Mr. Roberts has a point: Nobody has brought out a complete translation of the quatrains, in proper sequential order, since the Garencleres edition of 1672; and as far as I know, nobody has even brought out a complete French text since the Barestre edition of 1840.

What has appeared is a lot of books of "interpretations", in which a comparative few of the stanzas are cited between long stretches of speculation and prophecy by the writer—who is generally most concerned with proving that his side of whatever war is going on is bound to win, because Master Mike said so. (Both sides of both World Wars were encouraged in this manner.) Hence, even if you own several of these books you cannot—without a cross-index file—locate, say, Quatrain VI, 47 when you wish. In fact you may not even possess it.

Examination of the book, however, shows that Mr. Roberts has not taken full advantage of his opportunity. For one thing, the book includes the *Centuries*, the *Preface*, and the *Letter to Henri II* only; not the oft-cited *Presages* and *Simains*. For another, the French verses are printed without the customary French diacritical marks, which means that many words are simply misspelled. And, as diacritics are a necessary part of French spelling, and distinguish many otherwise-identical pairs of words, the text is thereby rendered more confusing than ever. The reason for this singular lapse might be that the second edition of Nostradamus (Lyons: Bonhomme, 1558) from which Mr. Roberts got his text lacked accent-marks, or that Mr. Roberts' printer lacked them. Now, I have not seen the second edition or the first (Avignon, 1556) either; but having seen

the third (Amsterdam: Jansson, 1668) and being not altogether unfamiliar with sixteenth-century French I can say that diacritics were in regular use in Nostradamus' time, though not to the extent they are nowadays. Wherefore the true explanation is probably the latter one. In that case, however, Mr. Roberts should not boast that his French text is "exactly" like that of Bonhomme. (And when are you going to do something about your accentless printer, Mr. Lowndes?)

Most of the stanzas appear to be translated in a reasonably competent manner; but I looked the book over to see if I could catch any such howlers as Lamont's mistaking *deuil*, "mourning", for *duelle*, "duel", or McCann's taking *l'etiere* to be "litter" in the sense of "mess" instead of "sedan-chair". And I found one: a line in I, 52, *L'Europe basse et Septentrionale*, literally "Europe lowland and North" (which might mean "The Northern European plain") comes out "Europe in the depths and dismembered"!

Roberts has, moreover, indulged in a habit of most Nostradamians—that of "improving" or modifying the original French, first to make the many lines of sheer gibberish make apparent sense, and second to make the connection between the text and the interpretation seem more plausible than it would on its own merits. Thus in I, 55, the line *Sectes, faim, regnes, pestes, confusion*, literally just "Sects, hunger, reigns, plagues, confusion", is polished up to "Sects and famine shall rule over plague and confusion." Elsewhere *Port Phocen* (Phocæan port) becomes "Marseilles"; *Le sang Troien* (Trojan blood) becomes "French blood"; "Crete" becomes "Candia"; and so on. Less harm is done by such vagaries here, than in most Nostradamian books, because we do have the French text for comparison.

AS FOR the Interpretations, Roberts follows many of his predecessors, though without mentioning that these predecessors have often composed many widely different interpretations of a given verse, with equally plausible explanations in each case. Hence in X, 73 he identified the "great Jovialist" with Rabelais, whereas others have held this character to be Voltaire, Napoleon, the planet Jupiter, and the Almighty!

All the book proves is that, as I have been demonstrating for years, you can

take any piece of vague and metaphorical verse that has been lying around a few centuries, and so many millions of events will have taken place that with a little ingenuity you can *always* find some events that seem to reflect the text, with speciously convincing isomorphism. Then one can use this apparently-valid prediction as a basis for finding prophecies of the unknown future in the rest of the author's works. But despite all the Nostradamian books that have been written, there is no "hard" evidence that Mike ever really "saw through time" at all. Mr. Roberts tried this method with I, 33 and got the result that Churchill would lose the recent British election!

Still, if you want to fool around with the hobby of Nostradamianism, Mr. Roberts' book, with all its faults, is still much the most useful text presently available.

L. Sprague de Camp

To the above, I would add: if you want to know what the argument is all about, here is a chance to see for yourself, rather than taking third, fourth, and fifth-hand sources of information. The ideal translation would *still* be a translation, and there is a very apt Italian phrase, *traduttore, traduttore* (translator, betrayer) which has to be borne in mind. Which means that, irrespective of the ability, honesty, sympathy, etc., of the translator, something is still going to be lost and/or distorted in the process of putting into another language.

Our pages are open to Mr. Roberts if he wishes to answer Mr. de Camp's specific objections. I'd say that a few "howlers", such as de Camp cites, if they are "boners", would be expected in a translating-task of this order, and should not prejudice anyone against the whole; in fact, it would seem to me that to say, as our reviewer has said, that Mr. Roberts has done a "reasonably competent" job is to give high praise indeed! If any readers want to enter the argument, the letter department is wide open.

Meanwhile, I'll content myself with stating that I was very pleased to see this volume, that I think it is most reasonably priced, and it belongs in every fantasy fan's library. RWL



THE TWICE - TOLD MAN

A Fable of Futurity by Maurice Raboïd

After centuries of torment, came temptation!

THE HEAT of the blue white sun beat down with flesh-searing incandescence; sand stretched a thousand times as far as the eye could see in four directions, the desert unchanging. The only respite given the timeless sands was from occasional low-strata thermal storms that swept down from the poles, with aggravating infrequencies.

In the geometric center of the gigantic sea of sand a tower reared more than a mile into the air—an obelisk of unchanging, immutable ebony. The tower of blackness tapered to a slender platform no more than a dozen yards across at its peak; at its base, an inscription read, *Let no creature defile this tower. It is not a monument, nor a crypt, but is a prison. Shun this tower for it contains an evil that destroyed half a galaxy!*

On the platform of the impressive spire stood a man of classic proportions, a mane of shaggy golden hair falling about his shoulders. His massive arms hung downward, almost touching his sides, but prevented from doing so by shackles. No ordinary bond, these, but shackles of energy. The man was clad in a tunic, plain and unfestooned; his head was bowed but his knees were unbent. His eyes were open but they saw not; his ears listened though they heard not. He looked to be about thirty-five years old.

The planet was so massive and its gravity considerable, but the man stood tall and straight as if he were the center of gravity in the cosmos

and the ponderous planet with its white hot sun paid him fealty rather than the reverse. This man ate not and slept not. That he was weary was obvious, but the scintillating bands of energy permitted him no respite. He had not been there very long as the stars measure their lives, but man does not measure his life-span by that of the stars.

He had not heard the telltale drone of a spacecraft in so many thousand years, that, at first, he did not credit its sound to anything more than the idle buzzing of his brain. As it came closer, however, it assumed the deep throaty roar of a craft operating on the ordinary second-order drives that were so familiar to him. He did not raise his head. Why! What use to seek out the alien craft and follow its delicate trajectory through the pink sky till it reached the level of his platform and the beings could stare and gawk? Why watch strange life-forms labor at deciphering the inscription at the base of his prison, then scurry back into their ship and blast off under full acceleration, as if all the devils in hell were pursuing them?

The drone turned to a muted mutter and coughed into nonexistence. He could hear the creak of an extension walk as it crept out of the side of the ship. What manner of fools were these? No one had left the safety of their ship to approach since—since he had been incarcerated, so long ago.

He could hear hesitant footsteps approaching. How many legs had they?

How many eyes, if any? He wondered; he felt a slight twinge of curiosity seep through him; but he would not open his eyes, or give them the pleasure of being noticed. He did stand more erect and take his chin off of his collar bone though.

A SOFT, lilting, feminine voice came, "Is he dead?"



*"She is here of her own free will, Gobi, and she shall stay . . .
if we get what we came after!"*

Is he dead? Someone had spoken in the universal tongue! This was no exploring alien. Yet—it could not be a fellow-human; he had no fellow humans. Not even the eons he had spent on the tower were enough to make the human race forget, much less forgive!

"No, he is immortal." This time a man's voice spoke. He could no longer keep his eyes closed; he wanted to talk to a human once more, even if only to hear curses, hear himself damned for a hated and evil thing!

Standing in front of him, on a slender

extension walk protruding from a gigantic spaceship, were three humans—two men and a woman. The race had progressed some since his day; the two men were both taller and heavier than he—though both were very pale of skin. The girl was a hand shorter than he, and while she was also pale, it was extremely becoming. Humans! He was elated to see people again; then a little of the old bitterness returned and he drew his lips into a sober scowl.

"Look he's awake!"

"Be still, Adell. I see. Don't worry;

he won't harm you," said Estes with a wan smile that belied his self-assurance.

Control said, "I am Control; this is Adell; and this is Estes. We are all citizens of the island galaxy you call Retreat. And you are—?"

The great bronze man shrugged his golden hair back from his face with a twist of his neck. "I am Death!" He paused, letting his words sink in, searching for the contempt in their eyes that he knew they held in their hearts.

He repeated, "I am Death; I am the Destroyer; I am the Purge; I am the most hated man in all of creation. Welcome to the Tower of Eternal Penance, my humble abode on a planet that always keeps the same face toward the sun, so that I may not ruminate in shadow or in darkness. A planet with three times my normal gravity so that I may not move too freely, so that my heart must labor knowing that it may never stop, so that my lungs must strive like a colossus knowing full well they may never seek rest or relief in death. Welcome to the planet Grief. I am Gobi Waintuck."

"Yes, you are Gobi Waintuck," said Estes, "and we have come to do something we never contemplated necessary—to ask a favor of you."

Gobi winced. "You are mad. I am despised by all mankind and I fervently return that hate a hundred-fold. You forget. Man put me in this living tomb!"

"You destroyed half a galaxy," said Estes matter-of-factly.

"That I did, and, by the great and mighty gods of all creation I would accept twelve times this torture to be able to do it again."

"Precisely why you were pened up like a wild beast. It took three trillion people, many of them technicians and scientists, to accomplish it, too," said Control.

Gobi grunted disgustedly, "They devised a way to hold me, not to trap

me." He stared fixedly at his chains of pulsing energy. "It was a woman, of course; it had to be—even though I knew then, as I know now, that the greatest of masculine frailties is woman."

"Nevertheless, you committed the most deadly crime in existence, the methodical destruction of the human race."

"Human, you call them!" Gobi shook in a paroxysm of fury. "I had ample cause to hate you all; you killed every mutant on my planet—including my parents—and this mass-murder was fully sanctioned by the Galatic Government and the Federated Planets. My planet was my own macrocosm, my own sphere of existence. When that was destroyed—am I to be blamed?"

"You were not killed," interposed Control.

"Hah! No! I was not killed, but it was not for lack of trying. I was not decayed by your virus not contaminated by your radiation. You did not suppose that some mutant would find the highway to immortality and tread its length so quickly. Nor did you suppose that he, one puny, sentient creature, could invent the mythical disintegrator that great powers had spent their entire resources seeking for ages. I relished the last sight of every planet that dissolved beneath the pressure of my thumb; and while I could not hear the final screams, I could to remember the death-knell of my own world.

"Now you return—you who called me filth, pigmies who slew the elephant, maggots that feed on the lion's carcass! Well," Gobi roared, "which is it you seek, the disintegrator or immortality—or perhaps, both?"

The three of them stirred guiltily at having their purpose guessed so easily.

"Ho! Come now, you're not surprised that I knew? What greater urge could there be to make human beings defy the ancient covenants,

and plunge through the intergalactic abyss into the heart of the Dark Nebula to the planet of Grief circling the Sorrowful Sun, to confront the greatest menace in the universe, who dwells unwillingly atop the Tower of Penance? What incentive could there possibly be greater than that of immortality—or the power of the disintegrator?"

ADELL STOOD in awe. Could this magnificent creature be the most hated being of all creation? Could he be the bogeyman of a thousand civilized worlds? Millennia atop this somber pinnacle, with the omnipresent sunlight beating mercilessly upon his brow, and still he stood there with his superhuman vitality and hurled fire and brimstone at his captors! Proud, defiant, unbroken, every inch alive and every ounce a demigod.

"We want no part of immortality," said Control, irritated.

"Ah! It is the disintegrator then. And what would you do with it—destroy the remaining half of the galaxy?"

Estes and Control said nothing, waiting for the refusal they knew was bound to come and had prepared for.

Gobi's eyes narrowed speculatively. "Obviously, you not only receive, but expect refusal; therefore you, no doubt, have brought enticement. This enticement, what might it be?... Wait let me guess."

Estes and Control both had a feeling similar to that of a very small mouse about to be pounced upon by a very large cat. Adell seemed too engrossed to feel anything.

"Freedom? Absurd. Gratitude? Ridiculous. Entrance to the living-quarters built into the tower, instead of this eternal platform? Perhaps—but my sentence is a living death and not merely exile. Companionship? Hmmmm. Quite possible. Yes, I'm sure that's it; you've brought me a companion, haven't you?"

"Yes, in return for a working-model of your disintegrator."

"You, Estes, are a greater ass than I supposed. How long would a human last me?" Gobi snapped his fingers. "A human lifetime this long, to me."

"We assumed you would give her immortality," Control purred.

"Her? What are you prating about? Have you forgotten? I am Gobi Wain-tuck. Little children scream, and women faint at the mere mention of my name. I am a spectre, and I am in prison; who might you find that would willingly share my perpetual anguish?"

Estes and Control turned as one and stared fixedly at Adell. Without hesitation she stepped forward and put her cool palms on Gobi's shoulders.

Gobi furrowed his brow in deep concentration. "This does not ring true; I smell duplicity. What prompts her to this?"

It was Estes' turn to seem puzzled. "Her motives are strange to us, also; she is a throwback, an anachronism. One of the last of a sect called romanticists. She is here of her own free will, and here she shall stay...if we get what we came after.

"We will let you into the tower which is huge enough for eons of diversion and enjoyment. You will no longer have to stand beneath the harsh heat of the Sorrowful Sun."

"Why?" asked Gobi, cryptically.

"Why?"

"Why must you have the disintegrator at the price of alleviating any small amount of my torture?"

"It is the old story of intergalactic invasion by the alien hordes. They come from an island universe hitherto unexplored by man; they are sweeping down upon our periphery suns in an inexorable phalanx of incomparable technology. We are beaten back at every point. Another ten years and we will be nomads in space, scrounging the waste planets of the Adelphi systems, with naught to show for our once intergalactic culture but feudal

wars and the remains of a barbaric heritage."

"There is no turn of events I relish more."

"Doubtlessly; but don't you see what you might gain?"

"Gain?"

"Restitution," said Estes. "Perhaps even amnesty."

"If I spurned these things a million years ago, what makes you think I'll want them now?"

Again, as in answer, they both turned to look into the deep hazel eyes of Adell.

Gobi let his breath out in a long sigh, almost inaudible in the vast confines of the desert. His chin dropped back to his chest. "All right—release me."

"No, not until you complete the disintegrator. You may direct the work from the platform. How long will it take?"

"How long? Maybe a month, sidereal time," said Gobi, his eyes glittering intensely.

THE WORK started in earnest from that moment forward. Gobi drove the countless technicians who swarmed from the ship at a killing pace, amongst a myriad of strange electronic and chemical field-patterns. Gobi had them constructing complex organic molecules and fissioning strange inorganic ones; each was kept busy at a specialized task that contributed to the complex machine that was gradually taking shape—a machine that none fully understood save Gobi. Every fifteen hours he would give them a brief respite for the rest that they needed, but that his immortal body did not.

Gobi had them construct a repolarizer that turned day into night for a twenty mile radius. During the short rest-periods he would tremble ecstatically as Adell ran her fingers through his yellow mane and kissed him with

a passion he had not known for a millennia.

The disintegrator took shape rapidly under Gobi's expert direction; the years had dulled his genius, and he showed it at every turn with his innate ability to grasp the use of machines and technology millennia in advance of anything he had ever experienced before.

IT WAS finished in three weeks time, and Gobi stood once more confronted by Estes, Control and the lovely Adell. Gobi's gray eyes fastened themselves upon them intently.

"Now you will release me." It was a flat, convictionless statement.

Estes smiled. "Gobi, in our mythology we have a fable that is older than yourself. You probably know it well; it's called 'The Twice-Told Man'. You will remember that the twice-told man was very very bad to his relatives and friends, so his guardian angel punished him by making him spend the rest of his life as a monkey in the forest. Then, one day, he had a chance to save the life of his guardian angel; but he was determined to exact his freedom as a reward for doing so. The angel promised him his freedom and he saved him. But as soon as the angel was saved, he vanished with a derisive laugh, breaking his promise. Unfortunately the twice-told man did not know that his angel was Satan in disguise!"

The three of them laughed uproariously. Gobi fought back his rage. "What of Adell?"

This sent them into new paroxysms of mirth. Estes sneered, "Adell is an android! A stupid, unfeeling, unthinking android, conditioned to make simpering love to you while you gave us the secret of the disintegrator."

"Then there are no intergalactic hordes, no fiends from outer space clanging their battleaxes against the bastions of the Retreat?"

"Slime!" spat Control. "Of course not. We need the disintegrator to invade Wihlehaus, the nearest of our galactic neighbors. They want only to be left alone, but we need more room; we are still expanding, and they have many green worlds ripe for the plucking."

Estes broke in, "We shall make gypsies of the lot of them with this—" gesturing at the disintegrator which was just disappearing into the side of the ship.

"You do not intend to let me into the tower?"

"Let you into the tower!" said Estes in utter scorn. "You seem to forget, you are the twice-told man." So saying, the three of them spun on their heels, reentering the ship which hesitated only seconds before blasting off. It was an odd time for Gobi to smile, but smile he did.

IT WAS hardly two months later that Gobi heard the roar of another rocket. He had not moved a millimeter; he stood tall and firm like an ancient Norse deity carved in granite. The roar dwindled and ceased. Gobi opened his eyes to see six small amphibians from Wihlehaus emerge from

their spacecraft and waddle their rotund little green bodies toward him.

"They came?" asked Lun Lun, in a halting facsimile of universal speech.

"They came, just as you told me they would, two hundred years ago. You were right about what they wanted also."

Gobi paused momentarily, "I gave it to them."

The six pudgy emissaries from Wihlehaus looked at him as if he had just told them a badly off-color joke.

"You gave them... what?" queried Lun Lun.

"The disintegrator," Gobi told them remorsefully. "I know what you're thinking, exactly. But you are wrong; when they activate the disintegrator, the Retreat will cease to exist. I have not done a halfway job this time, my friends; this time I have killed an entire galaxy!"

"Come," said Lun Lun with compassion for the suffering that was evident in Gobi's eyes; "we will release you, and take you to the verdant, quiet worlds of our peaceful galaxy."

Only once on the long, tedious trip to Wihlehaus did Gobi speak, and then it was only to chuckle, "The only thing they did not consider was my having known the story of the twice-told man!"

* * *

Equations For Destiny

(Continued From Page 27)

marriage to you. And I speak not so much for myself, but rather in all humbleness for the chances of a million generations of men yet unborn."

She had the goodness to blush; Dutro was pleased.

"I accept," she said promptly, giving him her hand with a warmth he had not known was in her. "Nothing has ever been closer to my heart. But you must know that our food cannot last more than a few days."

Dutro nodded happily. "In ten min-

utes you and I travelled ten billion years. Surely, in the next hour or so, by short intervals of 'time travel', at varying rates according to how completely we nullify gravity with our generators, we can find the proper time in future history. Our descendants shall populate a whole solar system, and when the time comes to leave a finally-dwindling Sun, move through 'time' to conquer the Galaxy."

He reached for the switch.

★

REJECTION SLIP

By Ben Singer

The story of the desperate scribe who held a gun on the editor is hardly a new theme — but here's a novel twist on it!

"**S**IT DOWN; I'll be right with you." Jackson left the office and reappeared in a few minutes with a paper cup, which he proceeded to drain. "Now, what can I do for you?"

"Well, Mr. Jackson, I've brought you a story and—"

"Fine," the editor said, looking away. "If you'll just leave it with—"

"But Mr. Jackson, I'll be leaving for my vacation in a few days, and I certainly won't enjoy it—not knowing whether—"

"Okay," the editor said wearily, "let's see it..."

"Hi, Dor-Y," called Gor-T, the censor of *Twentieth Century Stories*. "Have the judges reached their decision yet?"

"Yep. And what do you think?"

"What?"

"They accepted it."

"No! What imbeciles. Wait till I'm promoted to magazine judge; I'll show 'em how to grade a story. Of course, production's your line—you wouldn't really care what they let through."

"Production men have morals too,



Jackson decided to be discreet about it...

Gor-T; don't let the old judge fool you. I agree with you about that yarn—I'll bet half of our subscribers will trade their printies in for new models, figuring their sets have gone haywire, when that story comes through."

"Remind me to put in a good word for you next time the old judge has me on the carpet. By the way—specifically what did you think was wrong with the story?"

"Characterization, of course; that mid-twentieth-century editor was completely incredible. Who would believe that the whole responsibility for a format's stories lay with one man? Who would believe he had the power to influence the thought of hundreds-of-thousands of readers? Any outfit that tried that would get the maximum penalty, nowadays; they just couldn't have been *that* primitive in the old days."

Gor-T nodded and then said, "Don't repeat this, but personally, I think the scribe who wrote it—has his time-periods mixed up."

"No!"

"Yes. But there's no sense in telling that to the judges; they'd ask who am I, a lowly censor, to analyze scribes. They might even send me off to a social-super-egotorium for a check."

"Yeah. They might. Remember what happened to Mor-T? He got an avocation permit and started writing non-fiction. Even though the Supreme Judges handed down a decision that non-fiction was legal—they still held the right to restrict its quantity; after all, the basis of our whole economy, our entire society, is fiction. Well, Mor-T was turning out an article *every twelve or fifteen months*. In short, he became a—" He paused nervously and looked around, "*—a hack*," he whispered.

"Careful how you use that word, Dor-Y. If anybody hears, you might be sent off to a slander-sublimation-school. But go on; where is Mor-T now?"

"According to the grapevine, he's been turned over to a literary agent; and I hear the agent has been bearing down on him. Sent him through a supervised story-writing school three or four times already; from what I hear, every time the instructor asks him a question, he answers with—the *clique*."

Shocked, Gor-T shook his head. "You mean—" he lowered his voice, "—who, what, and why, when and where?"

"Yep. And, listen to this. I hear they might even give him the Blue Pencil treatment—like they did with that female reformer, Ger-T."

"I remember her—a real crackpot. She kept throwing ideological appeal into her stuff. Claimed our whole social structure was wrong. 'Government', she wrote, 'should not be merely words on paper; this system,

wherein a society is controlled by symbolism, is nothing more than an extension of the old saying, *Monkey see, Monkey do*.'"

"How did she ever get it through, anyway?"

"Let's see...as I remember it, a sector technician slipped it into a prime sequence; that was before we had automatic verifiers. The damn thing got a readership of seventy-two percent because he threw her thing in on the middle of a good novel, then stepped up the power to maximum. But they got their just deserts; Boston Prime banished them to an art colony—you'll get a kick out of this—an art colony on the coast of California."

"I pity them. All that warm weather—ugh! Well, I suppose they deserve it. That's life."

Clang-gnip-gnop. Gor-T jumped. "There goes the deadline bell; gotta get to the phraseology department. Look, I'm supposed to go over that wretched story and iron out any dangerous significances. Talk it over with you at Sin's *Sin Tavern* after press time. Okay?"

"Okay."



"Hmmm. Are you serious about this?"

"I am, Mr. Jackson."

"Well, I've seen crackpot stories before, but this takes the cake. I'm busy now, so why don't you drop back in a couple of months, or years? We might have an opening in file thirteen."

"If you don't want an opening right now, finish reading my story. This forty-five pointing at you is guaranteed to work even on editors."

"Since you put it that way..."



"The colossal egotism of that scribe. Is he trying to make us seem

like figments of his own warped imagination?" Gor-T asked, heaving the manuscript down for the fifth time.

"How do we know we're not?" Dor-Y answered, reaching for his beer.

"How do we know? Pinch me. Ouch! Is that proof enough?"

"Nope; even pain can be synthesized."

"Are you trying to tell me that a— a whim can have an imagination? What foolishness!"

"Maybe. Think of all the dream-within-a-dream sequences you've censored; and what about subtleties-within-subtleties? They amount to obviation, don't they?"

"Well, you may not believe in yourself, but I'd prefer to believe myself more believable than that anthropomorphic science-fiction editor. If it's a choice between me and that knuckle-head character, I pick me. After all, if you actually believe that hogwash about fantasies-within-fantasies, then why can't the characters have freedom of choice? I choose to believe that we are real and that these—these figments," he pointed to the manuscript, "are figments."

"Yeah, but what if that ancient science-fiction editor prefers to believe *us* fantasy and himself real? Where'll that leave us?"

"Hmmm. Maybe we'll cancel each other out—or will we?"

"Yes, unless we find some way to write him out of the story. Got any idea how that can be done?"

"Why yes, I think I do, since he's the prime character. Good thing the author-character is secondary."

"How?"

"Remember, the author-character had a weapon with him. If he blasts the editor into oblivion, the editor will have no choice; then we can dismiss him from our minds as only fiction." Gor-T started to laugh.

"Then how can he get rid of us?" Dor-Y asked.

"Rid of us? Oh! I forgot all about



that. The moronic scribe who created this monstrosity should be made a free-lance! If the editor writes us out, he'll destroy our whole social system. All he has to do is destroy our function, and then—who knows?"

"Quick," Dor-Y said, "grab your blue pencil and start re-writing, fast! Before he gets wind of what's up."

•

He raised the pistol and aimed it at Jackson. "I notice you don't like my story, so—" ... He raised the pistol and, leveling it at Jackson, said, "I notice you don't—"

•

"Forget about grammar and punctuation, there's no time to lose! Those science-fiction editors were devious sons."

•

"Wait! Hold it," Jackson said. "I'll buy; just let me change the ending."

"Well..." the writer said, lowering the gun.

"Two cents a word!" the editor whispered.

"Two cents a word! For two cents a word, I'd write my own obituary. Sold!"

•

To Some Future Scribe: As I sit staring at my typewriter, I wonder if
[Turn To Page 81]

The Mislaid Tribes

Special Article by L. Sprague de Camp

THE SEARCH for the Lost Ten Tribes of Israel forms a major pseudo-scientific cult. The Lost Ten have been identified with the Aztecs, the Welsh, the Chinese, the Anglo-Saxons—in fact, practically everybody except the Australian aborigines. How did these tribes get lost, and what really became of them?

The known history of the Ten Tribes is as follows: After King Solomon died, and his son Rheoboam made his tactless remark about chastising his people with scorpions instead of with whips, the Hebrew kingdom split. While Rheoboam kept control of the southernmost tribes of Judah and Benjamin, and called his shrunken kingdom "Judah", the remaining tribes (Reuben, Gad, Zebulun, Simeon, Dan, Asher, Joseph, Levi, Naphtali, and Issachar) revolted and set up their own kingdom, which they called "Israel" (formerly the name of the united kingdom) or "Ephraim".

Two centuries later—about 722 B. C.—King Shalmaneser IV of Assyria invaded Israel and for three years besieged its capital, Samaria. When Shalmaneser died during this siege, one of his generals seized the throne and took the name of Sargon, after the ancient Sumerian king, Sargon of Agade, who had lived 2,000 years before. Then he pushed the siege through to victory.

A Hebrew historian described the fall of the town in the following words: "In the ninth year of Hoshea the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away into Assyria, and placed them in Halah and in Habor by the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes." (2 Kings xvii, 6.) That is, they were planted along

Amazing, isn't it, what things can be the basis of a pseudo-scientific cult?

the River Tigris. Sargon's own report read: "*The city of Samaria I besieged, I took, I carried away 27,290 of the people that dwelt therein; fifty chariots from them I took and the others their share I caused to take.*"

A century and a quarter later, Nebuchadrezzar of Babylonia did likewise to Judah. These deportees, however, stuck together; and after the Persian conquest of Babylon freed them, many returned to Palestine. But what became of the Ten Tribes of the Sargonic deportation?

In the first century A. D., the great Jewish historian Flavius Josephus casually stated that "*the ten tribes are beyond the Euphrates till now, and are in immense multitude*," a remark that lacks corroboration from other historical sources, and was probably not based upon any firsthand knowledge. The apocryphal 2 Esdras, or *Apocalypse of Ezra*, written in Greek about 100 A. D., which does not even pretend to be history, also mentions the Ten. Here an angel shows a vision of a crowd to Ezra, explaining that these are the Lost Ten Tribes, who had migrated "*into a further country, where never mankind dwelt*," a year and a half away, "*and the same region is called Arsareth.*" Was "Arsareth" Ararat, or a corruption of the Hebrew 'erets 'ackereth, "another land"? Nobody knows. Anyhow, if the Ten had really gone to an uninhabited country, eighteen months' journey away, how could the author of 2 Esdras have learned about them?

The story might have ended there,

had not the Romans destroyed Jerusalem in two great wars, in the first of which Josephus himself fought, and scattered the Jews of Palestine. During their Roman war, the Jews had hoped that their brothers beyond the Euphrates would come to their help, but none ever did. Later, when Christianity and Islam became dominant religions and began to persecute their parent and rival Judaism, the Jews naturally wished for a powerful Jewish state to which they could turn in their travail. The wish being father to the thought, by the seventh century rumors circulated about a mighty Jewish kingdom in the East.

FOR A time, in fact, such a kingdom really existed. The Turkish Khazars built an empire north of the Caucasus, with advanced ideas about commercial enterprise and religious liberty. About 740, Jewish missionaries converted Bulan, the Khakan of Khazaria, and in time most of his subjects followed his example and Judaized. Even after the Khazar Empire in the tenth century was overthrown by the Russians, its memory lingered long.

In the ninth century, one Eldad ben Mahli appeared at Kairawan, in Tunisia, announcing himself as envoy from a Jewish kingdom in Ethiopia, comprising four of the Ten Tribes. They lived, he said, on the banks of the River Sambation, a remarkable stream that comprised a waterless torrent of gravel, and so very pious it ceased to flow on the Sabbath. The local Rabbis were polite to Eldad, but noncommittal. European myth-makers like Sir John Mandeville, adopting the yarn, transferred the river of gravel to Asia—which they could do with ease, because most Europeans of that ignorant age weren't at all sure that Asia and Africa were two separate places.

During the Crusades, when peoples' nerves were on edge with predictions of the End of the World and the Coming of Antichrist, persecution of

Jews became unusually vicious. As many Jews set out upon a "Crusade" of their own to find the Jewish kingdom, Benjamin of Tudela appeared in Germany with an account of a fictitious nation of 400,000 Jews in the Euphrates Valley.

Many Christians believed that Alexander the Great had shut the Ten Tribes up around the Caspian Sea with a wall of bronze and iron. When Jenghiz Khan's Mongols swept across Eastern Europe, many thought that these "Red Jews" had broken out of their wall to over-run Christendom, and used their terror as an excuse for pogroms. Some Jews made matters worse by hailing Jenghiz as the Messiah. The Mongols were not Jews, of course, despite the singular fact that Jenghiz had a division of Judaized Mongols in his army.

While exploration slowly confuted the legend of Jewish Empires in Asia, the search for the Lost Ten Tribes continued. Discovery of the Americas started a wave of pseudo-scientific speculation about the origin of the American Indians, which has continued down to the present day—despite the fact that anthropologists have pretty well established that (as Sir Paul Rycout opined about 1700) the Indians came from Asia via Alaska a good many thousand years ago. People who met the Amerinds for the first time, jumping to premature conclusions, imagined that they were speaking Welsh and were the descendants of the legendary Prince Madoc ap Owen Gwynnedd and his band, (pronounced "gwun-cdh") or that they were practising Hebrew religious rites and were the Lost Ten Tribes.

This last theory was set afloat by Spanish missionaries like Bishop Diego de Landa (the scoundrel who burned the books of the Mayas) and by the adventurer Aaron Levi. Levi told Manasseh ben Israel, a learned rabbi of Amsterdam, a tall tale of his visit to a society of Jewish Indians in Peru, descendants of the Tribe of Reuben.

Manasseh wrote the story up as *The Hope of Israel*, and entered into correspondence with some Puritan divines in England. The latter brought the theory to the attention of Oliver Cromwell, who invited Manasseh to visit England. As a result of the friendship between himself and Manasseh, Cromwell tried to have the Jews readmitted to England, although he was able to carry this out on a small scale only. It was even suggested that the American aborigines should return to Palestine, but fortunately for the peace of the world they showed no disposition to do so.

THE LAST prominent Amerind-Israelite, Lord Kingsborough, spent his entire fortune of 40,000 a century ago publishing *The Antiquities of Mexico*, a monumental work in nine huge volumes, any one of which takes a strong man to lift. They contain reproductions of Aztec picture-writings and works of art, and voluminous notes arguing the Jewish-Indian theory. Kingsborough's obsession finally landed him in Dublin debtor's prison, where he died.

Others continued to find the Ten Tribes elsewhere. Odum identified them with the Japanese; Tyler with the Zulus; others with the Masai or the Malays. Joseph Smith's *Book of Mormon* makes the Amerinds the descendants of a party of Jews who emigrated from Jerusalem in the reign of Zedekiah, but he did not claim that they were the Lost Ten. The most original theory—originally promulgated by Capt. J. C. Symmes, an American hero of the War of 1812, and expanded by his son—asserted the earth to be hollow with a hole at the top and the Ten Tribes inside.

Confusion was aggravated by the fact that many people have claimed, on dubious grounds, to be descendants of the missing Ten Tribes, or of other Old Testament characters. Thus the Karaites of Russia, though linguistically and racially Tatars, have

claimed to be the Ten; so have the Mountain Jews of Daghestan, a tribe of stalwart Caucasian highlanders; so have the Nestorian Christians of Kurdistan. Furthermore, groups of people practising Judaism in various degrees of purity are found among the Falashas of Ethiopia, the Negroes of Portuguese West Africa, and the Chinese of Kaifeng, all with unreliable tales of how they got there. It is evident that, whoever were the original missionaries or colonists, their physical type has long since vanished by intermarriage with the natives of these far countries.

American Negro cults have even taken up the theme. Thus W. S. Crowdy, who founded the Church of God and Saints of Christ, in 1896, said that the Negroes were the Lost Ten Tribes. On the other hand the Commandment Keepers, Holy Church of the Living God, regard the Blacks as the authentic Tribe of Judah, the Whites being the Lost Ten.

The notion that the Ten Tribes were really the people of the British Isles—first suggested by John Sadler in 1649—did not really take hold until the coming of Richard Brothers (1757-1824), a Newfoundlander who settled in London, having tried a naval officer's career, marriage, and vegetarianism all with indifferent success. In 1794, Brothers began to issue a blizzard of books and pamphlets which endured until his death. He announced himself as the Nephew of God (a relationship to puzzle the most acute theologian) and the divinely-appointed prophet and descendant of David, who was destined to become Prince of the Hebrews and eventually Ruler of the World.

Brothers prophesied the violent deaths of the Kings of France and Sweden; this prophecy's fulfillment gained him a great occult reputation in short order. He also predicted the imminent fall of the Russian, Turkish, and German Empires. As a first step towards his world rulership, he urged

George 111 to abdicate in his favor. The government, already nervous about their mad king, locked Brothers up as a criminal lunatic—not that it would have made very much difference which madman was king.

THE ORIENTALIST, and Member of Parliament, N. B. Halhed, whom Brothers had promised to make Viceroy of India when he became king, got him out of confinement. Brothers spent the rest of his life either in asylums or living upon his disciples, unable to repair the damage caused to his reputation by failure of the Russian and other empires to collapse.

After the death of Brothers, his followers Hine, Finlayson, and Wilson published books a little more coherent than those of their master. British-Israelism took root in America, and reached its climax in the 1880's, when it probably possessed two million adherents. Even Queen Victoria and Mary Baker Eddy expressed interest in its theory. Judging from the volume of publications, however, the cult started to subside in the 90's and is now much smaller—notwithstanding some revival after World War I. Organized into several societies such as the British-Israel World Federation, it supports publication of occasional books (repeating all the old and long-explored arguments) and several periodicals like the *America-Israel Message*.

While most British-Israelites feel fairly friendly towards the Jews, the doctrine has been exploited by some anti-Semites. Whereas French anti-Semites embrace the theory because it gives them an excuse for hating the English as well as the Jews, Anglo-American anti-Semites go so far as to argue that Jews are not genuine Israelites at all—that the Anglo-Saxons are the only true Israelites and therefore God's Chosen People.

According to British-Israelites theory, the Ten Tribes remained in Media until they revolted and fled in

650 B. C. In the next twenty-two years they dropped their Semitic speech for an Indo-European language, adopted pants, and became the nomadic Scythians, who for a time terrorized the Middle East and even extorted gifts from Pharaoh.

Not satisfied with being Scyths, they set out to the northwest until they came to Germany. Somewhere along the way they not only changed their language again—this time to a Teutonic tongue—but also altered their appearance, becoming blond Nordics. For such accomplished migrants this was easy, or else God helped with a miracle. They now called themselves Saxons, meaning "Isaac's sons". Although they evidently remembered Isaac, they forgot everything else about their history and religion; but, despite these changes, they remained throughout pure-blooded Israelites. At length they invaded England and fathered the British people of today.

As if this were not enough, British-Israelites also derive the Irish from Hebrew sources, thus: It is known that after Nebuchadrezzar's deportation, the prophet Jeremiah went to Egypt with King Hezekiah's daughters. British-Israelites gratuitously assume that Jeremiah sailed from Egypt to Ireland, taking with him Zedekiah's daughter, Tamar Tephi, and Jacob's Stone—which had been miraculously preserved ever since that mythical patriarch used it as a pillow. There an Irishman married Tamar Tephi and begat the Celtic "race". Jacob's an Irishman married Tamar Tephi Stone became the Lia-Fail (Rhymes with "see a fall") of Irish legend. Later, it was taken to Scotland, where it became the Stone of Scone, and ended up in the base of the English coronation chair, where you may now see it. You no doubt recall the whoop-deedoo in early 1951 over the theft of this stone by some young Scots and its subsequent recovery.

The many objections to this tale include the following: There is no

authentic Irish history before the fourth century A. D., nothing in Irish legend about Jewish immigrants, and nothing in the Bible about Tamar Tephi, Ireland, or Jeremiah's leaving Egypt. The Stone of Scone in all probability, for geological reasons, hails from the west of Scotland. The whole story of the Lia-Fail's importation to Ireland is a myth, and a late Christian version at that. Even if it had a basis of truth, the rival Lia-Fail at Tara, Ireland, has a better claim to being the original than the Stone of Scone. But never mind; it makes a good yarn.

BRITISH-ISRAELITES—trying to make a great point of the distinction between the terms "Jew" and "Israelite"—assert that "Israelite" refers only to the ten-tribe kingdom of Israel, while "Jew" means the tribe or the kingdom of Judah and their descendants. Thus, they say, Abraham was not a Jew but an Israelite; Jesus and His disciples were not Jews but Benjaminites, and so on. Actually, in cases like this, words mean whatever the people who use them intend them to mean. This distinction between "Jew" and "Israelite" *did* exist once—but only during the first two or three centuries of the three thousand years of authentic Jewish history. Thereafter the Prophets, the historian Josephus, and the Christian Apostles used both terms indiscriminately, to mean any adherent of the religion of Yahveh.

Having established, as they suppose, a special meaning for "Israel", British-Israelites cite the Old Testament prophecies that promise Israel a glorious future, as that they shall be an island nation (*Isaiah* LXIX, 12), ruled by a king of the house of David (*Jeremiah* XXXIII, 17); the chief of the nations (*Deuteronomy* XXVIII, 1-14); undefeated (*Samuel* VII, 10) and so forth. Since Britain, or the English-speaking peoples, are supposed to answer to this laudatory description, Britain and/or the United States must be Israel.

To tell the truth, however, all these citations are somehow defective: The verse from *Isaiah* says nothing about islands; England and the United States have had their share of defeats, and so on. Jeremiah actually prophesied a never-failing Davidic monarchy, which forecast was plainly falsified by the fall of King Zedekiah, showing the prophecies of Jeremiah to be no more infallible than any other sermons.

British-Israelites even display sublime linguistic ignorance by trying to derive the English and Irish languages from Hebrew, and finding "Hebrew" place-names along the alleged route of the Tribes—the Don, Dnieper, Dniester, and Danube all being named for the tribe of Dan.

By this remarkable method you can prove whatever you please. If I want to show that the Amerinds descended from Greek colonists, I derive the Mandan Indians from the city of Mantinea in Greece; the Croatans from Krotona; the Chilkats from Chalkis; the Kiowas from Chios; and the Aleuts from Eleusis. What could be fairer?

Actually this Anglo-Israelite vagary is in effect an attempt to revive the old theological notion that all languages are derived from Hebrew—an idea thoroughly exploded with the development of scientific linguistics, following the discovery of the Sanskrit literature in the late eighteenth century. The fairly close relationship between English and Irish is shown by their numerals, for instance; *one, two, three, four, five* being, in Erse, *aon, da, treis, ceithre, cuig* (compare Latin *quatuor, quinque*); while the Hebrew *'echad, shenayim, shloshah, 'araba'ah, chamishshah* show no resemblance.

What, then, *did* become of the Ten Tribes? The answer is simple. A tribe is not a race, or a hereditary trait like haemophilia; it is an association of people, like a club or a company. It is, moreover, a primitive social group—

appropriate for nomads—which soon dissolves in a civilized community like a lump of sugar in a cup of coffee. The sugar molecules are still there but the lump isn't.

Furthermore, despite all the talk of British-Israelites and anti-Semites about "race", the Jews never have been a race in any scientific sense. In Biblical times they were probably of the same mixed Mediterranean-Armenoid type of the "White Race" that has prevailed in Palestine, Syria, and Iraq from earliest historical times down to the present. Since their dispersion, the Jews have become even more genetically mixed and physically variable as a result of intermarriage with the Gentiles among whom they have settled; today the Jews of Poland, Italy, etc. more nearly resemble their Gentile neighbors than they do their remote Palestinian ancestors.

THE ORIGINAL Israelites seem to have been Wild Arabs, who swarmed out of the desert to conquer the Hebrews whom they found living in Palestine. The Hebrews and their conquerors worshipped assorted jinn, bull-gods, snake-gods, and fertility-goddesses. The Israelite ruling-class either brought with them, or took over from the Hebrews, the cult of the storm-god Yahveh, with the result that Yahvism gradually became the dominant religion in Palestine. Authentic Hebrew-Israelite history starts with Saul or a little earlier; everything before that in the Old Testament—Adam, Noah, Abraham and Moses—is more or less legendary.

Solomon deliberately broke down tribal distinctions by ignoring tribal boundaries when he divided his kingdom up into counties. Sargon's deportees, as you can see from his own figures, were but a fraction of the population of the Kingdom of Israel, and his deportation was but one of many. Psamtik I of Egypt and others kidnapped thousands more and settled

them in their own countries as garrison colonies; the Jews were much sought-after as soldiers because of their courage and ferocity. These colonists made thousands of converts to Yahvism, so that in Roman times millions of Yahvists—"Jews" in the ordinary sense of the word—dwelt in Southwest Asia and North Africa: some of Palestinian descent, some sprung from converts, and some—or most—mixed. Many were subsequently converted to Christianity or Islam. The remainder, with additional mixtures, became the Jews of today.

During the Exile in Babylonia, tribal distinctions vanished among the Jews altogether, so that for a post-Exilic Jew to trace his descent from this or that Tribe was merely a quaint affectation, like Mayflower Societies. To try to find these Tribes now would be like searching for the twenty tribes of early Rome in modern Italy.

Of the Israelites deported by Sargon, some, remaining faithful to Yahveh, became known as "Jews" like all other Yahvists. The rest disappeared among the local populations by ordinary assimilation, with the result that most modern Iranians and Iraqis are without doubt descended partly from them. For a tribe to disappear in this simple manner is perfectly natural; nobody gets excited about the disappearance of the Hittites or the Goths. The mystery is not that the Ten Tribes disappeared, but that the remainder survived as a distinct group, despite so many discouragements, down to the present day.

"Ten-Tribism" would be a fairly harmless mania, as cults go, except for the sinister suggestion of some British-Israelites, that the Anglo-American peoples are a special "race" chosen by God to run the earth. The last people who considered themselves divinely appointed world-rulers were the Germans and the Japanese, and you saw what happened to them!

THE REMEMBERERS

Someone had cut off all communication with Earth, and the ship was alone. But why did everyone want to protect the saboteur?

by H. Charles Blair



Sing Ship!

Sing, as you voyage into darkness toward the stars. The universe awaits; you must fulfill your destiny; you must spread the race of man.

And you are a joke.

For your women have given themselves up to madness. One by one have they died. Of the twelve human beings who embarked, four remain. Four helpless men, clinging to your guts, living on memories of a world they once knew, mockeries of what was to be.

...and the body of the last woman was jettisoned into space a trillion miles back.

CRAIG froze. On the table! His radio, his dream, his golden link with home, a glittering ruin of broken tubes and severed wire.

He clutched the door-handle for a moment. Nausea swept over him; he wanted to vomit, to scream, to cry.

He didn't; he just stumbled through the open door to his labor of years. He felt a momentary urge to pick it

up, fondle it, smooth away the dents, wash over the look of tortured destruction.

"Three years...three years..." He sat down on his cot and looked at the wall for a long time; contemplated his dream of listening to the warp broadcasts from Earth—of hearing the old Earth music again, the rich classics and the bittersweet folksongs from the heart of mankind.

He would never hear them now.... Who would do a thing like this?

Then he felt it—a vague, whispering touch of something cold and potent. An alien mind was touching his, probing it, squeezing it, rolling it over like a piece of dough in a child's hands.

"Get out of my head!" Craig was on his feet, icy tremors racking his body. He pounded his forehead in animal terror. "Stop it! Stop it! Stop!"

He went blind with agony, felt his body knot convulsively and drop to the floor. Savage mental hands were tearing his brain-tissue out in fistfuls; he felt a murderous snap of release.

Craig sat up. The mind-contact was gone; his breathing was a rasping thunder in the cabin. He could smell his own sweat; his muscles were water. He wasn't thinking of the pain, now; he was thinking of a sardonic face and two hypnotic eyes of whitish green—lik moss in a sea of milk.

Pindar, the ship telepath; he had powers which no-one understood. Scott and Billy didn't know. He brought them letters from friends and lovers on Earth whose minds were attuned to his. But this showed he could reach other minds—and hurt them!

Pindar had not been shanghaied by the fanatics who thought Armageddon was at hand on the Solar and were sending colonists to the stars. He had been there when they had awakened, inscrutable—never speaking of his past.

Craig looked at his hand. It was shaking. He commanded it to be still;

it still shook. He thought back to the years of rocket-testing. His nerves had been steady, then; but no madman had ever attacked his brain before.

He stumbled into the passage. He had to find Billy—tell him about his radio...and Pindar.

HE FOUND Billy lying on his cot, hands clasped over his eyes. He sat up as Craig entered the room. "What's the matter?"

Two men don't live on the same ship for three years without knowing each other's mood on sight.

"My radio—its been smashed!"

Craig paused, and, getting no reaction, went on passionately. "It's Pindar! He wants to control all our contact with Earth. Don't you see that we're in his grip, now? He has powers in that freak mind we don't know anything about; I think he's insane!"

Billy looked at him for a long moment. His sensitive lips seemed to move, caressing some unintelligible phrase. His long supple fingers twitched, and he started for the door.

Craig caught him by the shoulder and spun him around. "What the devil is this? You're not on his side?"

Billy looked away.

Craig's voice was very soft. "Remember the years we've stuck together—remember at the space-station, before we were drugged and put aboard this coffin; remember how we worked together, taking hot ships with the bugs still in them and putting them through their paces?"

"We've been pals too long. You aren't running out now?"

Billy spoke with his face still averted. "I saved your life while the others were raving with space-fever...all the women and most of the men. The madness had them and it had you, too. I pulled you out—they're all dead and you're alive; I don't owe you anything!"

Craig smiled. "I never said you did. But I'm your friend. The others don't understand..."

Craig knew Billy was thinking back

—not only to their rocket-testing days but to the long hours in the guts of the ship, singing space ditties while Craig played. Billy loved the music of deep space; it represented an ideal buried deep in his insides.

No, the others didn't understand, but Craig did...

"No." He choked on the word. Breaking away, he strode down the passage, his thin body moving very fast.

Craig watched him go.

He turned away. There was a sheet of paper on the bed. He picked it up. At the top of the page was the single word "Billy."

CRAIG began to read.

Today was warm. We celebrated the second anniversary of the signing of the Great Peace Pact. There was a parade.

The band played *Roar, Rockets, Roar!* and *My Sweetheart Is in Deep Space* and they finished with *The Song of the Outer Void* while everyone stood at attention. We used to sing that on our long walks.

I went over to the old space-fields today. Remember how we used to stand in the weeds by the fence and watch the ships blast off at night? Well, they've rebuilt the whole thing. It got smashed up when Mars began her bombing before the first truce. It looks just like it did when we were kids. On clear nights I can see the rocket trails against the stars from the back porch.

The other day I went back to that little grove of trees where we used to eat cookies and gingerale. It still smells like cut grass. I sat down on the big log and watched the sky. Saw a few birds down by the horizon. Wonder where they were going.

That's it.

Paul

Craig felt trapped. Pindar was Billy's link with Earth; he would never try to break that link. Scott would have the same attitude.

Craig snapped erect in sudden decision. "I'm going down there alone. I've got to fight this out with Pindar."

He walked quickly out the door and down the passageway.

Once he felt the mind-touch. It only flickered across his brain this time, touching it like a cold wind. Yet

even that touch revealed a terrible power; Craig had the impression of staring down endless corridors of geometric impossibility.

Suddenly, he doubted his ability to deal with this thing, this god who could strike him down at will. Perhaps he was just being given enough rope to hang his hopes... his soul.

He came on... doggedly.

Scott stepped from his cabin as Craig walked past. He caught him by the shoulder. "Where you going?"

"To see Pindar." Craig had a sick feeling in the pit of his stomach as he looked into Scott's dark eyes. They had a queer hardness about them... as if Pindar himself looked out.

"You're not going to hurt Pindar." Scott spoke as if under the stress of great emotion.

"Scott—you must listen to me!"

The hardness melted and he stepped back. "I'm listening."

The words rushed out. "Pindar's a madman. He has us all under his power; he smashed my radio and—"

"I know it."

"Billy?"

"Yes, he told me. I think you're crazy."

"But I didn't tell Billy everything. I felt Pindar touch my mind, tear it up, rip it to pieces."

Scott looked sick. "Space-Fever! You smashed that radio yourself!"

"No, you're wrong; it's Pindar I tell you! I'm all right." Craig realized suddenly that he was screaming. He saw Scott's hands clench.

Space-fever victims were locked in their cabins to rave. Usually they died. "Let's go to my cabin to talk this over." It was the most transparent trick.

Or was it Space fever after all?

Scott's slim body blocked the passage. Craig charged him desperately, relying on surprise to throw his opponent off-balance. It didn't work. Scott moved with the grace of a ballet-dancer, sliding his body neatly under

Craig's and throwing him full length over his back.

Craig was stunned. He rolled over and got to his feet. Scott made no effort to stop him; his handsome face was smiling. "Now come to the cabin."

Craig struck out blindly, desperately. His fist smashed into Scott's face, battering his lips against the wall of his teeth.

Scott reeled back, stunned. He looked at Craig a moment, reason fighting animal rage. The rage won; he spit out a little blood. Craig never knew a man could move so fast. Scott was on him in an instant, driving both hands into his body.

Craig met the attack savagely almost tearing his enemy's head off with a right and following it with a brutal series of chopping blows. The two reeled about the passage, battling with the maniacal fury of brothers in space. Blood ran from Scott's eye; he blinked and fought on.

AFTER a time, Craig smelled something like burning insulation. Hot lights came up and filled his eyes; he went down. Even as he fell he could see Scott diving at him. From somewhere came strength; he pulled his leg up close and kicked out savagely.

The blow took Scott squarely at the belt-line and sent him sprawling. He hit the floor and his head struck the door-jamb.

Craig started to get up. It wasn't easy; he finally got to his hands and knees. He realized vaguely that Scott was getting up, too. Then he was on his feet, facing his opponent once more. He could see the red blood in Scott's hair at the place that had hit the door-jamb.

Craig stumbled down the passage.

"Stop—stop!" Deadly voice of pain. Scott was following. There was the dull thud of a body falling to the carpeted floor. After awhile Craig looked back. Scott was still follow-

ing...on his hands and knees. The pain must have been very bad, but he made no sound.

"Must get to Pindar!" Craig wanted to vomit, but there was nothing inside. The passage began to spin; he clutched at thin air for support.

"Got to go on... *Got to!*" He was aware of a terrible agony in his head. He staggered forward, almost falling many times, but always saving himself. And behind him, on hands and knees, crawled a man with blood in his eyes, blood on his shirt, and a twisting stream still flowing from the gash in his scalp.

Craig felt a hand close about his ankle. As if in a dream, he lost his balance and fell to the deck. There was padding on this section of passageway. He tried to bury his face in it. It was too hard for that. He tried to get up, but Scott was on top of him, now, crawling over him to hold him there, to protect Pindar.

...Somebody was breathing very hard in his ear. The breath was warm. It was his space-brother...

Craig started to whimper low in his throat. Everything drew together into a single point of light. The point vanished, taking reality with it.

Darkness.

THE UNIVERSE came back in rippling flashes of light and pain. The inside of his mouth tasted like shoe leather. After a long period Craig managed to stand up.

It was Scott's cabin. The place smelled like him, blunt and leathery. He guessed that he had been dragged here. There was a little dried blood on the deck just inside the door.

Craig took a few deep breaths. They brought things into sharp focus. He pounded on the door; there was silence outside. "Guess I'll take the place apart."

He began to ransack the cabin, searching for something to use against the door.

It was under the pillow. Another letter in Pindar's handwriting—another letter from Earth.

Darling,

The papers have just named me, "Miss Solidocast". They say that when I sing a romantic song I seem to be making love to every man watching.

It's not true. I see your face in the cameras and I just sing to you, 'way out in space. Do you hear it? I hear your voice in my dreams, saying the things you used to say.

I keep your picture on the table by my bed. I kiss it every night and every morning.

I'll always love you, my darling...there can't ever be anyone else."

Maureen

Craig began to laugh. He choked off; the paper in his hand was the nucleus of a life. It meant something solid and genuine to a human being.

He was alone. Alone against the others.

There were tools under the bed. He was glad Scott had been too far gone to remove them; Scott had just barely removed himself, apparently.

It took an hour to open the door. It

was constructed to hold the ship's air against the terrible vacuum of space, should the compartment be punctured. He crept down the passageway, alert to sound. There was none. He headed for Pindar's cabin.

Passing the hold, he saw Billy sitting at the piano. He held a thick sheaf of papers.

Craig guessed they were old letters—letters from Earth—written in Pindar's handwriting.

He walked past the open doorway. Billy did not look up.

PINDAR'S cabin was open. The man was lying on his bed. He seemed asleep. His flesh looked cold.

"Pindar!" Craig snarled the word. He felt like an animal before this man.

The being on the bed came erect in his queer clumsy way; his great bald head seemed too large for his thin body. "What do you want?"

"I want to know why you're prob-

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QUARTERLY**

ing my brains, and turning my friends into beasts raging against me!

"And my radio—you smashed it to cut us off from Earth! What's the reason for all of this?"

Pindar made a gesture of dismissal. "No! I'm not leaving without some answers." His voice dropped in volume and raised in intensity. "I'll take it out of you with my naked hands."

He watched the other man intently for some reaction. He saw nothing in those hypnotic eyes but a great well of sleep.

Pindar let out his breath. "Come in—close the door. You are a man of honor."

Craig felt the hair along the back of his neck rise. He was acutely conscious of an electric power hanging in the air, like the stench of a short-circuit.

"Why can't I listen to the voice of home?"

Pindar's fingers flexed. The motion spread up his arm and radiated throughout his body. He sat down on the bed. "Earth!" It was a prayer and a blasphemy. He laughed—a little hacking cough in his throat.

"The Solar War ended five years ago. Earth was torn apart and the pieces blasted to atoms! Earth is gone—forever!"

The scream ended. He rolled over and looked at the bulkhead.

Craig held up his wrists and inspected them. They were hairy. The veins from the back of the hand plunged under the fat right there and continued up the arm, submerged.

Earth was gone; it would never be again.

He remembered everything he thought of as Earth. Lights and bells, stinks and dreams, emotions and sensation. Sun baked ground against the cheek, big trees ruling the world.

Shut the eyes—hard! The memories went away.

"Pindar—you rotten liar!" His voice was very harsh and strained in the air.



He saw only compassion in those greenish eyes. The hatred and fear drained out of his.

He knew.

Earth!

A girl's voice was singing in the back of his brain. Singing an idiot's song.

"Never again...never again...never again, my darling...my darling, never again."

Pindar said, "I loved her, too."

He crossed the cabin and opened a chest in the corner. Craig knelt before it. Pindar moved away.

The chest was filled with maps, postcards and strange dreamlike paintings—all of Earth.

There was a click. Pindar had turned out the light. Craig could see Pindar's body outlined in the fuzzy red light from the stars at hyper-light velocity.

It was like being in a great church.

THE VOICE was soft. "There's a map of the home town of every man I've ever shipped out with. And those paintings—right out of their minds.

"I never saw Earth; I was born in deep space."

He held out his hands in a little yearning gesture. "It must be very beautiful."

"Never saw Earth?"

"In deep space, the only Earth I knew was the Earth the homesick men cried about, the drunks raved about, the crew sang about. They

thought I was just another telepath—that I read only attuned minds instantly across space. And I lay on my cot reading their minds—hates and loves and hopes and dreams...”

The two men stared at the dim fireflies that were universes beyond the port. Their hearts beat.

Craig broke the spell. “You’re going to tell them. You’re going to stop writing letters out of their memories and dreams of home. You smashed my radio so I wouldn’t tread on the sacred past; you were afraid I’d pick up Venus city.

“Well, Earth is dead! Stop living a lie and give them the truth!”

The shadowy body seemed to sway in some intangible wind. “Tell them—tell them to stop loving because the thing they love is dead? Wipe out the reason for living? No.

“What kept them from space madness? Love of their home world. They had something to cling to; they still need it.”

Pindar turned and moved toward Craig. He flung out his arms and embraced him like a brother. “I was going home. Home to Earth after a lifetime on the trans-Jovian run.

“And I got drunk, raving drunk! “When I woke up I was in this

ship. They took my home away from me—are you going to do that to the others?”

Craig pushed the gaunt, trembling body away from him. “I don’t know... I don’t know.” His voice was tortured.

“Craig—we’re just little men in a little ship going God knows where. It makes me afraid to think of it.

“For us Earth is still there. The cities and the towns, the seas and the rivers, the hills and the mountains. What difference if it exists in actual space or in our minds. We are exiles.

“Reality is within this ship—nothing else can touch us. I have created Earth here—painted it in two minds. Will you rub it out?”

Craig turned away savagely. He doubled up his fist and hit the wall with terrible violence. Then he looked at the blood running through the skin. His voice was flat. “I’m sorry—sorry—you’re right.”



Ten minutes later, a man was playing the piano in the hold. He was laughing very loud but there were tears in his eyes.

There were cuts in his knuckles. He was getting blood on the keys.

* * *

Rejection Slip

(Continued From Page 68)

I effectively ended the possibility of your interfering again with the publication of my work. I have suspected all along that it was you who caused me the agony of remaining unpublished.

You have been writing rejection slips into the story of me. Well, I think I dealt you a death-blow in this last story; you were just written out of existence by the characters in my story, the aspiring writer and the editor who feared for his life.

Now if the editor to whom I sent the manuscript only realizes the truth—that he is being controlled by

a literary hack somewhere and sometime, then I shall never receive another rejection slip. If, on the other hand, he doesn’t believe—

Here comes the mailman.



Thank you for the opportunity of examining your manuscript. We feel, however, that the characters in your story were not real enough to warrant belief on the part of our readership. We do hope that you will continue to submit...





DOWN TO EARTH

A Department For Science-Fictionists

(continued from page 10)

(continued from page 10)

presentation.

(3) (3) () Time Killer—Dye: fair enough for a first story.

(3) (1) () In the Balance—Youd: I suppose that if I were an editor, I'd just remember that the story and writing itself was tops; but as a reader, I find the sociology most repellent.

(3) (2) () Elixir—Blish: fine idea, routine handling.

(3) (2) () Stairway to the Stars—Shaw: satire spread too thick; funny, though.

(3) (1) () A Secondary First—Henderson: same as above.

(3) (2) () Not Quite Human—Petaja: writing not up to story-level.

(3) (2) () The Tinkerer—Lombino: melodramatic, though clever.

(3) (3) () Fountain of Death—Farrel: fair enough story, but no characterization.

(4) (2) () Two Worlds For One—Smith: just plain unconvincing.

(4) (3) () Day of the Hunters—Asimov: more of an essay than a story.

(4) (3) () Afterthought—Fyfe: a weird tale in science-fiction setting.

(4) (2) () The Barbarians—Morrisson: good plot, but old-fashioned handling.

(4) (3) () "A" As in Android—Lesser: tired, overworked device.

(4) (2) () Martian Homecoming—Long: another weird tale on Mars.

(4) (2) () Dark Cloud—Wilson: fine idea, but juvenile handling.

(4) (2) () This World Must Die—Fyfe: just didn't click with me, sorry.

(4) (3) () The Troubadour—Sherman: I'd have rated it higher had I not seen the device a dozen times before. Even so, it was well done.

(4) (2) () Regeneration—Dye: well done, but already done to death.

(4) (1) () The Way Back—St. Clair: sentimental; too much like Bradbury.

(4) (2) () Devil's Cargo—Wilson: had I seen this in a detective magazine, as

an off-trail story, I'd have felt better about it.

(4) (2) () They Will Destroy—Walton: don't care for the mystical touches.

(5) (2) () Parking, Unlimited—Loomis: trite.

(5) (4) () Imitation of Death—del Rey: fair story, but poor for this author. You really should have used a pseudonym on it.

(5) (1) () Iteration — Kornbluth: nonsense.

(5) (4) () Moon of Memory—Walton: let's not discuss it.

(5) (2) () Green Man's Grief—Shaver: nonsense, though good for this author.

(5) (2) () Woman's Work Is Never Done—Merril: cannot say I care either way.

(5) (4) () Remember the 4th—Loomis: stale.

(5) (2) () Mask of Peace—James: just plain didn't like it, sorry.

(5) (4) () Ismail, the Outworlder—Wellman: let's forget it.

To sum up, out of 73 stories, I found 12 outstanding; 19 definitely better than good; 20 good enough; 13 just passable, and 9 you should have bounced, for my money. That makes a total of 31 on the positive side, and 22 on the negative. Not too bad in these days of mass production, and you seem to be improving as you go along.

All the articles and departments have been fine by me, and the letter department strikes me as being about the best out. I mean the way you handle it, of course.

Willis Freeman

Skowhegan, Maine

(Quite an impressive listing. If anyone wants to try the same after our 24th issue, I'm willing to run it.)

A COMPOSITE

Dear Editor:

I am not a regular reader of *Futurist* in

fact, this is the first that I have read. I must say that I bought it in spite of the cover. It seems to me that science-fiction is a wonderful medium for modern art, but I've only seen one book that utilized it. However, I think that, even if you disagree with my suggestion about modern art, something ought to be done. Perhaps an odd combination of colors, or pictures of the solar system, or individual planets (the majority of science-fiction stories vividly describe their beauty, but I have never yet seen a picture that was more than mediocre) might be tried. Just so the inevitable picture of a beautiful girl trying to escape the clutches of a monster is forever banished. If you think that this has nothing to do with the cover of the November issue, it's because you read the story before you saw the cover. While I know now that Reese is suffering from a temporary mental condition, when I first saw it, I thought he was a particularly gruesome inhuman. And Lee looks as though she has just decided to abandon herself to cold space, rather than suffer a fate worse than death. Surely *something* can be done about it!

About the stories: "A Secondary First" was a refreshing change, even though it wasn't too subtle. However, it wasn't necessary to inform your readers that it was a satire. "Ismail the Outworlder" was purely an overworked bit of hackneyed plot that no amount of extraordinary or fascinating background could fully compensate for, and especially not this typical future history. "Experiment in Genius" and "Voices in the Void" are averagely good stories, with no outstanding good or bad traits. "The Way Back" is the best story in the issue. Both its idea and literary qualities are excellent.

As a whole, the magazine is a composite of many different types of stories which appeal to different people. This is very desirable, in my opinion. I must say that I was pleasantly surprised to see that the magazine was much, much better than I was led to believe from the cover.

Bernard Varjick
118 East 103d Street
New York, N. Y.

(I think you'll find a touch of the modern art approach you were asking for in the cover A. Leslie Ross drew for our July issue.)

NO STANDARDIZATION, PLEASE!

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

I picked up the November *Future*, as usual, at my favorite newsstand. My pre-cognition factor was completely out of kilter—all I was looking for was an entertaining evening with one of my favorite magazines. I got that, of course, but also a bonus. I'd tied for first place in letters and was to receive an original!

Me and the mailman, we got to be real chummy. He'd shake his head a block off to tell me, "Not yet", where I stood at the side of the big silver spruce, waiting. Fingernails went first, then fingers, and I was seriously contemplating the elbows when the signal was "Yes" and the original had arrived. He—the mailman—had waited with me, so we opened, inspected, and *approved*. Beautiful, all framed now with an oyster-white mat and narrow black frame, it graces my livingroom wall. Secretly, I'm sure I'm the envy of friends, even if I can't sit down at the piano and surprise them. They, poor dears, can talk about their operations, but I have my original. Thanks—such an inadequate word, but anyway, I mean it.

Now, November *Future*. You asked about the "Reckoning". Honestly, I don't care what the story-rating was. It doesn't change my mind one bit on the evaluation I give stories. I do like the readers' comments, whether we agree or not. Complete agreement on stories, or anything else, would tend to make life deadly dull, don't you think? Whatever the rating, I'll promptly go to bat for my two favorites in the November issue.

"Experiment in Genius" is plenty good, and even if (heck, I know it is!) it be rationalization, it gives one such a nice feeling to say, "Hrmm. Frustrations are the tools that make what passes for genius in the ordinary guy crystalise. I knew there had to be a reason why I can't do what I want! All I have to do now is live long enough!" Seriously, though, the psychological reason in the story was sound for both Bruce and the son. Let's have some more Temple, huh?

Second favorite is St. Clair's "The Way Back." There's a yarn that makes one feel with the people, and the plot is skillfully developed. To me, at least, this a quality-level story.

I liked de Camp's article, too. Though it

isn't fair to twist an author's work and use it to illustrate something different, I'm still going to do it. "...the temporary suspension of disbelief (which) enables you to enjoy tales of fantasy and faerie with your imagination, and then to return to the world of reality and live by the laws that rule it," seems to me to be a good directive as to how to enjoy science-fiction and fantasy to the hilt. Such a definition rules out the scientific impossibles that pop up from meticulous readers—they just don't make any difference. For the duration of the story, you accept the author's premise and enjoy yourself.

I get so darned tired of boy-gets-girl variations in the slick fiction. Science-fiction makes an effort to come up with a new idea, or carry an old one to the logical ultimate. Temple did the latter in his story. If we keep up this standardization, we're going to end up with stultification, and with people like me exterminated for the good of the race. There's always the possibility that the race would be better off, but I'm darned sure I wouldn't! And *Future* would lose a good customer. . . .

Again, thanks for the original.

Alice Bullock
812 Gildersleeve
Santa Fe, New Mexico

(Of course you shouldn't let the other readers' opinions, as summed up in the "Reckoning", alter your own! See letter below for suggestions as to why the department is popular.)

NO DEFERENCE

Dear Editor:

Perhaps some of the readers feel that the "Reckoning" is a waste of space, but I'm all for it. Not that I think any less of my favorite story if it came out last, but that I like to see if other readers have as good taste as I have. Naturally, it's a pleasure when the final listing comes out the way I put them myself.

If you're in a mood for contests, giving away originals, etc., why not have a sort of raffle—that is, why not send originals to the readers who list the stories the way the final rating shows, after all the votes are counted. There shouldn't be so many winners that there won't be any originals left to send to the letter-writers.

Did you forget to list the original-winning letter in the November issue, or wasn't there any winner? (I can't find any mention of a winner in the March *Future*.)

Most unfair of you to forbid us to vote more than once on "Beautiful, Beautiful, Beautiful!" That story was a humdinger, and you should have let us vote at least three times!

Glen Monroe
Bronx, New York

(Er—uh—well, it looks as if I just forgot about the prize-winner for the November letter contest. Shall remedy omission right here and now; we're sending an original to Robert Marlow.)

AND YOU ARE RIGHT, AND I AM RIGHT

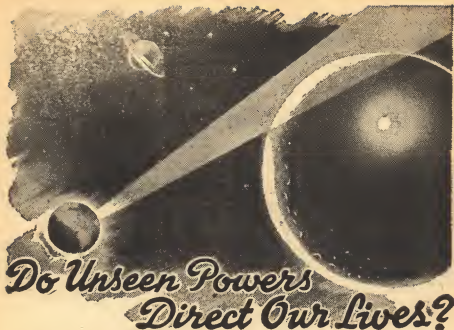
Dear Bob:

Since Sprague de Camp's reply to my letter in the January *Future* (commenting upon his article, "The So-Called Fourth Dimension") seems to be more concerned with establishing that both of us are right than with answering my specific criticisms, I think it would be best for me to let it go at that. I prefer distinctness of definition to amity, but since Sprague, apparently, doesn't, we are not likely to find a common ground on which to argue.

I'd like to conclude, therefore, with a correction of my own letter. In it, I refer to Riemannian geometry as pseudo-spherical. This is inaccurate; the Riemannian geometry is the spherical, or positively curved one; Lobachevski is the author of the pseudo-spherical space. I don't know how I got the two attributions swapped, but I did, somehow, I'm surprised that de Camp didn't notice it.

James Blish

(The trouble is, your typing fingers can do the damndest things, but you're still likely to read the result the way you thought you were saying it and be honestly sure you had typed it that way. Then there's the Freudian theory of errors, which seems to me to imply that, were it not for various psychic blocks, which are responsible for other, more serious symptoms, we wouldn't make errors of speech, typos, etc., at all. Incidentally, there's an area which I don't recall seeing covered in psychological science-fiction stories.)



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AN ENIGMA

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Thus far, your magazine is somewhat of an enigma to me. The appearance is certainly not prepossessing, but then one can claim, "What can you expect for twenty cents?" (There are numerous answers to that, of course.) However, you do have enough of the name authors to intrigue those readers who buy what looks interesting.

Alas, gone are the days when I could read everything that hit the newsstands—and read it with great avidity. Nowadays, I am hard put to find time to read what I do buy. So where does this leave *Future*? Sort of betwixt and between, I would say. Those stories which I've read have all been mildly enjoyable, although there has not been one which I remembered as outstanding. And yet—nothing has been so bad as actually to make me angry, unlike the contents of a number of magazines now decorating the newsstands.

So, this brief and casual inspection appears to leave *Future* lying in a sort of pleasant mediocrity. I guess this won't make you too happy, but you could certainly do worse.

In the way of positive suggestions, other than a slight toning-up of story-quality, two come to mind. One, the veritable essence of futility, is to suggest that perhaps the covers are a trifle hackneyed. The other is simply to note that there is no use in securing decent interior illustrations if they get hashed up in printing.

Some of your readers might be interested in the fact that an extremely rare old-time fan-magazine has become available in limited quantity. I refer to the January 1941 issue of *Bizarra*, one of the prime examples of the printed fan-magazine. Containing such items as the first appearance of a Lovecraft yarn, the original ending to A. Merritt's, "The Dwellers in the Mine", and articles by John W. Campbell, and E. B. Smith, this long-unavailable publication can be obtained for one dollar from Don Ford, Box 116, Sharonville, Ohio.

Best of luck to you with *Future*.

Stan Skirvin
389 King Avenue
Columbus 1, Ohio

(I certainly agree on principle: a book which never sits you up, one way or another, isn't worth very much. Every publi-

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see it as belonging in a magazine which should be primarily concerned with fiction.

Reading "False Prophets Shall Rise" makes me wonder if there have been any "true" prophets, or reasonable facsimiles of 'em. And how would you judge? I'd say the "true" prophet would have to predict before the event, of course, and also be in a position where his prediction didn't influence the event. Maybe someone who wrote down prophecies and sealed them away until after the time when what he was predicting was supposed to come off. Either that, or someone who showed his "prophecies" only to people who could not possibly affect the predicted happening.

I can think of one instance; if I haven't been misinformed about it. I believe John Adams foresaw the Civil War, and pretty much for the reasons which historians later accepted; he didn't make it public, but confined the material to his diaries. But then, I suppose almost any intelligent bloke is good for one sound prophecy. Would you say that the prophet should be able to operate only in fields where he hasn't any special knowledge, or isn't concerned? What about it, Mr. de Camp?

Murray King
Greenwich, Conn.

(The deal now passes to Sprague, but I'd like to suggest that the "true" prophecy would have to include the prophecy itself as part of the event it predicts.)

DOWN WITH LETTERS!

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Maybe some of your readers are happy about the expansion of your letter department, but I'm not. Eight and a half pages of jabber, which might have contained another little jewel like "Beautiful, Beautiful, Beautiful!" isn't my idea of a treat; it's a treatment!

Don't mind the arguments between readers and authors. The letters in the January *Future* were interesting, and I'm in favor of this sort of thing. But page after page of story-ratings, tiresome reiterations of what you ought to do about the covers by armchair experts who never invested money in a magazine which has to sell to a mass audience—not just a handful of so-so-intelligent connoisseurs—is at least six and a

[Turn To Page 90]

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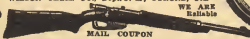


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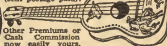
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half pages too much. Rocklyne, Walton, Loomis, and MacKinley had something to say, and I suppose an occasional public notice, like the Day letter, can be borne. But the rest—Lord deliver us!

I'll admit that *Future's* readers don't write as inane and stupid letters as I see in some of the other science-fiction books—or, at least, you have better taste than to publish them if you get them—but I still think it's a waste of space, and a waste of your time answering them. Why explain, when the amateur publishers still keep on raising the same questions again, as if you'd said nothing at all.

Please—cut out the letter department, except when there's some sort of intelligent controversy going on! (If you print this, I don't mind your using my name, but I'd appreciate your omitting the address.)

Nan Warner

(Expanding the letter-department is experimental. There's two reasons for using critical letters: first of all, there seems to be a large block of readers who want to read letters; secondly, we hope that still other readers will write and let us know where they approve or disapprove on points raised. If we received several thousand letters of disapproval on our covers, during one two-month period, I think they would definitely have influence. However, there's no use pretending that our mail reaches any such figure. The other way is to show a small but steady inflow of complaint, or praise on this aspect or the other; I have been able to alter a number of things which were disliked through this process—small changes, but then the overall impression of an object comes through a plethora of little things, as well as a few big items.)

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

Although I have never written you before, I have been following *Future* for some while. I think I have all, or nearly all the issues. I have broken my silence for a very good reason: Curiosity. I do hope that you may read this, even if it is not typed.

I have the November issue here before me, and may I say that while some of the stories were a little low on interest for me, there wasn't one that I typed "no good". "Ismail" was fine. I like this kind of story. "Experiment in Genius" was real doggone good. I am trying very hard to be a writer,

[Turn To Page 92]

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and I hope someday to write as well as that.

Mrs. St. Clair's story was unusual. Off the beaten track. She has improved tremendously here lately. But my real reason for writing was to see if I can find out anything about this writer who signs himself Gene L. Henderson. Is it his real name or a pen-name? Where is his home? Is he new? You see, I am Joan L. Henderson, and I can't help but be curious at the close resemblance.

Who knows? He may be a relative, and if he's a wealthy one, I shouldn't pass up an opportunity like this! Keep up the good work.

(Miss) Joan L. Henderson
472 Tenens Street

Martinsburg, West Virginia

(We'll have to let brother Henderson himself answer your questions, if he cares to, Joan. Since the gentleman is handled by an agent, I know nothing about him except that he can write stories I like.)

Dear Mr. Lowndes:

L. Sprague de Camp's article, "False Prophets Shall Rise" is all right in itself, but what's its purpose? Is he trying to say that all prophetic writings are phony? That there aren't any real prophets, so-called? He lists Mme Blavatsky's "Secret Doctrine" as one of the books which pretends to have been received under mysterious circumstances. Perhaps the testimony of A. L. Rawson, the famous painter, about one of her other books, "Isis Unveiled", will give de Camp something to think about: "Through a warm personal friendship with Pope Pius IX, and by special favor of the Pontiff, I was allowed, under surveillance, to examine some books in the secret chamber of the Vatican Library, absolutely forbidden to everybody but the Papal Secretary and Members of the Sacred College of Cardinals. Even these were not privileged to copy a line. Yet I affirm that several pages of extracts from these secret books are given verbatim in "Isis Unveiled".

Besides the book on Nostradamus advertised in your magazine, there's also another one I'd like to mention here. It is "Nostradamus on Napoleon, Hitler, and the Present Crisis", by Stewart Robb, published about 1942. This is a scholarly work, showing, step by step, and prophecy by

[Turn To Page 94]

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cess of the Nostradamians in producing, for a given piece of original text, equally plausible but diverse interpretations. Thus Nostradamus' X, 22, beginning: "For not wishing to consent to the divorce..." has been interpreted as the fall of Charles I of England, the exile of Charles II ditto, the fall of James II, the abdication of Edward VIII, a suppositious coming British republican revolution, and a suppositious future French monarchist revolution. I cited several similar examples as well.

I have known Stewart Robb (cited by Mr. Martello) for years, have dabbled in psychic research with him, and have argued his pseudo-scientific enthusiasms at length but without avail. He is a nice fellow but one with a mind incorrigibly hospitable to chimeras. Besides a Nostradamian, he is a British-Israelite, a Christian Scientist, a Spiritualist, a psychic researcher, and a psychometrist all at once.



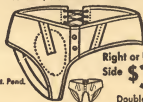
As for 'The Secret Doctrine', about 60 years ago, William E. Coleman traced down the actual sources used by Mme Blavatsky and learned that, far from being based upon occult records written on palm-leaves in the Senzar language in Atlantis and purveyed to H. P. B. in trances by her Mahatmas, the work and its predecessor, "Isis Unveiled", were entirely derived from contemporary occult and scientific books. Coleman wrote:

"In 'Isis Unveiled'... I discovered some 200 passages copied from other books without proper credit. By careful analysis I found that in compiling 'Isis', about 100 books were used. About 1400 books are quoted from and referred to in this work; but from the 100 books which its author possessed, she copies everything in 'Isis' taken from and relating to the other 1300. There are in 'Isis' about 2100 quotations from and references to books that were copied, at second hand, from books other than the originals; and of this number, only about 140 are credited to the books from which Mme Blavatsky copies

[Turn Page]

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them at second hand. The others are quoted in such a manner as to lead the reader to think that Mme Blavatsky had read and utilised the original works, and had quoted from them at first hand—the truth being that these originals had evidently never been read by Mme Blavatsky. By this means many readers of 'Isis', and subsequently those of her 'Secret Doctrines' and 'Theosophical Glossary', have been misled into thinking that Mme Blavatsky was an enormous reader, possessed of vast erudition; while the fact is that her reading was very limited, and her ignorance was profound in all branches of knowledge.

The main sources for "Isis" were Cory, Des Mousseaux, Dunlap, Ennemoser, Hone, Howitt, Jacolliot, King ("Gnostics"), Levi, Mackenzie, and other 19-century writers on the occult. "The Secret Doctrine" was composed in a similarly ignorant, blundering manner, being lifted largely from H. H. Wilson's translations of the "Vishnu Purana", the "Hymn of Creation" in the "Rig-Veda", Alexander Winchell's "World Life; or Comparative Geology", Donnelly's "Atlantis: the Antediluvian World", Oliver's "Pythagorean Triangle", and similar works.

Therefore, when Rawson claimed to have seen secret documents in the Vatican Library, which appeared to be sources for "Isis", I conclude that Rawson was romanticizing, especially as others have found the Vatican Library open to qualified scholars of all creeds, without any hint of a "secret" annex where the abhorrent "Necronomicon" and similar horrific works are kept. (See Vsevolod S. Solovyoff, "A Modern Priestess of Isis", London: Longmans, Green, 1895, p. 352ff; and Arthur Lillie, "Madame Blavatsky and her Theosophy", London: Sonnenschein, 1895, p. 9ff.)

L. Sprague de Camp.

TO OUR READERS

We appreciate all the kind words you had to say about the way we set up the Preference Page, last issue. Unfortunately, we cannot continue it thus, as there is a postal regulation that forbids the use of more than half a page for a coupon which is to be torn out and filled in.

MEDICAL RESEARCH DISCOVERS TREATMENT FOR PIMPLES

Acne, Blackheads, and
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**SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH REVEALS NEGLECT
CAUSE OF MANY SKIN TROUBLES**

Skin Specialists and Medical statistics tell us that broken out skin usually occurs from adolescence and can continue on through adulthood. Adolescents often carry these scars throughout their life. Many never get over the "feeling of embarrassment" and are always conscious of their appearance and complexion. Persistent cases of "bad skin" sometimes continue on through adulthood. In this stage of life, the responsibilities of earning a living and meeting people are essential if you are to climb the ladder of success in your job. It is doubly important to give your skin problems immediate care. Physicians state that to neglect your skin may prolong your skin troubles and make it more difficult to clear up. And, there is no better time to get pimples under control than NOW!

Laboratory analysis using special microscopes gives us the scientific facts regarding those unsightly pimples. High-powered lenses show your skin consists of several outer layers. Projecting through this epidermis, are hairs, the ducts of the sweat glands and the tiny tubes of the sebaceous glands which supply the skin with oil to keep it soft and pliable. Skin specialists will tell you that many skin eruptions can often be traced to an over-secretion of oil from the sebaceous glands. As a result of

**DON'T SPREAD INFECTION
BY SQUEEZING
PIMPLES AND BLACKHEADS**



Clinical reports state that many people squeeze out pimples and blackheads with their fingers. This is unsanitary and may lead to the spread of the infection. This abuse may also inflame your skin and leave red welts and ugly looking blotches and bumps. As a result your face may be covered with pimples and blackheads. Soar you'll be sorry you ever squeezed or picked at your skin by using this unsanitary method to get rid of skin eruptions.

**CAUSES OF PIMPLES AND
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this over-secretion, more oil than is normally required by the skin is deposited on the outside of the skin. Unless special care is taken, this excessive oil forms an oily coating which is a catch-all for all foreign matter in the air. When dust, dirt, lint, etc. become embedded into the tiny skin openings and block them up, they can cause the pores to become enlarged and therefore even more susceptible to additional dirt and dust. These enlarged, blocked up pores may form blackheads as soon as they become infected and bring you the worry, despair, embarrassment and humiliation of pimples, blackheads and other externally caused blemishes.



Illustrated is a microscopic reproduction of a healthy skin:

The sebaceous glands are shown as they project through the many layers of skin. In a normal skin, the openings of the gland tubes are not blocked and permit the oil to flow freely to the outside of the skin.

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THE RECKONING

A Report on Your
Votes and Comments

Despite a few bunches of stinkweed, the fact that only one vote less than an exact 50% of the coupons and letters put Ross Linden's feature story in first place leaves us no doubt that this story was approved. Those who disliked it couldn't agree much on a first-place choice, and all the other stories also drew some red marks, Petaja and Clarke the least.

Here's the box score, then:

1. Quest of the Queen (Linden)	2.34
2. Not Quite Human (Petaja)	2.82
3. They Will Destroy (Walton)	3.10
4. The Awakening (Clarke)	3.14
5. False Prophets Shall Rise (de Camp)	3.48

Sprague didn't draw any more poison-notes than Linden, but those who liked the article liked various stories better, and those who didn't, were vociferously vocal about it!

There are 7 items on the coupon, this time. A first-place vote will be noted on my sheet as "1"; a second-place "2", and so on. Any story marked "X", which specifies reader dislike, however, will be given 7 points and marked in red on my sheet. The total score for each story is then divided by the number of voters, and the quotient shows how the story came out.

Please let me know your reactions. The coupon below can be cut out, without mutilating any story or department, in the book, and is for your convenience if you have neither time nor inclination to write a letter. And vote for your favorite letter-writers, too; the winner for January was James Blish (who isn't a pen-name for your editor!).

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Number these in order of your preference, to the left of numeral; if you thought any of them bad, mark an "X" besides your dislikes.

- 1. Equations For Destiny (Berryman)
- 2. Thy Days Are Numbered! (West)
- 3. Forgive Us Our Debts (del Rey)
- 4. The Twice-Told Man (Raboid)
- 5. Rejection Slip (Singer)
- 6. The Mislaid Tribes (de Camp)
- 7. The Rememberers (Blair)

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- 1
- 2
- 3

General Comment

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"A few weeks ago I ordered the Appliance you made for me. I put it on the afternoon I received it and wouldn't do without it now. My fellow workers notice how much better I can do my work and get around over these ships—and believe me, the work is a heavy shipped in anything but easy. You have been a life saver to me. I never lose a day's work now. One of my buddies was repaired on the job about two months ago. After seeing my Appliance he wants me to order him one." J. A. Camen, 1808 Green Ave., Chicago, Texas.

Perfect Satisfaction in Every Way

"I am happy to report that the Appliance that I received from you more than a year ago has given perfect satisfaction in every way.
"In fact, I am not sure I will ever need another one, but I am asking you to send me the best grade as marked on the order blank, then if I should ever need it I would have it. I think I would want to use it where I go for my work or work at heavy work of any kind, just for protection." U. M. Heron, Monticello, Ky.

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327A State St., Marshall, Mich.

Without obligation, please send your FREE BOOK on Rupture, PROOF of Results, and TRIAL OFFER—all in plain envelope.

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City..... State.....

State whether for Man ☐ Woman ☐ or Child ☐